

JOURNAL OF EARLY SOUTHERN DECORATIVE ARTS

SUMMER 2001 VOLUME XXVII, NUMBER 1



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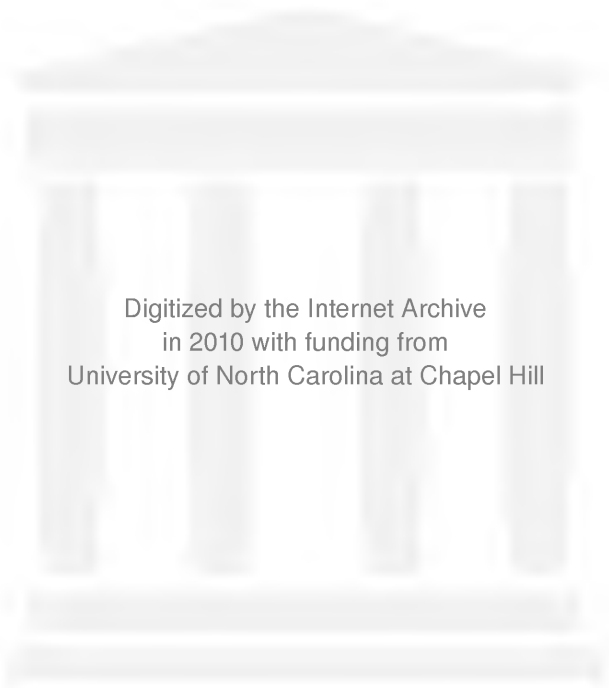
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FRANK L. HORTON AND
THE ROADS TO MESDA

By Penelope Niven

The *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts* is published twice a year by the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts (MESDA). It presents research on decorative arts made in the South prior to 1820, with an emphasis on object studies in a material culture context.

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Foreword

This will be my thirty-fifth year of being “assistant” to Frank Horton. Even though changing titles have described various duties, my role at Old Salem and MESDA has always been to be a bond with Frank—as his friend and for his projects. These two facets became inseparable as the early years passed and the object quest consumed many car hours in the field during the research programs. As always, anticipation led our discussions and mental imaging to see an object as being the rarest of rarities and to be had at the cheapest price. The excitement of the chase was always punctuated with road events that could fill a book that when published would have the best parts edited out for propriety. Occasionally a superb object would be found in a home that would well the emotion of lust. Upon leaving the house without the object, because we were unsuccessful in the purchase or the “no attempt to buy” understanding was in place (during the field research), our discussion in the car would often turn to our imaginary private, underground museum created to house and preserve all of the unobtainable objects for our personal enjoyment.

The restoration years of Salem and then the MESDA years found Frank’s education of my eye and mind exceeding the disappointment felt when Charles Montgomery asked Frank to let me attend Winterthur and Frank replied, “We have too much work to do here.” Two years at Winterthur would have been a great experience, but what I have seen, discussed, and discovered with Frank far surpasses any amount of time in Newark and Wilmington; besides, we

had work to do. In our work it became apparent that visual identification of woods was difficult, so Frank agreed to my spending a summer month during the late '60s at Winterthur under the tutelage of Gordon Salter learning microscopic wood analysis. During those years, Frank turned over to me his collection of 500 decorative art and history books—catalogued on the spine as “F” for furniture, “G” for glass, “I” for iron, etc.—and he said to me, “I will let you decide what books to buy to strengthen our growing library.” Now, 15,000 books later, few spines reveal evidence of “Fs” and “Is.” The joy of building a library, reading the accumulating books, and learning from Frank gave me an education I feel very privileged to have—truly time that changed my life as I became engaged with material culture.

This story can only begin to touch upon Frank's life, and his many friends could tell additional tales of Frank and what he did when he was younger. Over the countless miles traveled in the field, Frank told me many stories, some since forgotten (intentionally or unintentionally), of his life in military school and associated youthful ventures into Mexican border towns. Also told were dealer tales about the ones that got away and those brought back. All of those stories should have been tape recorded and more photographs of Frank taken; however, Frank did not like to be recorded and my efforts in secreting an active tape recorder in the front seat of the car with me were thwarted by engine and road noise. Many photographs were taken of Frank in the field and we had many from which to choose to publish with this story; however, I continue to comment: “I wish that I had taken one of him doing that.” When you are immersed in the event at hand, it is often difficult to capture the moment. That said, during my years with Frank, I knew that I was privileged to be with a remarkable person and secretly kept a file of photographs taken of him and items he had thrown away.

Now that Frank's life has been related in these pages, a feeling of completeness suffuses through a part of me. It is amazing that at this singular moment in time we were able to capture the evidence nec-

essary to tell a story that would have been quite difficult to tell at any other time. I am astounded that a such complete story has been told. I hope that the future will produce others to further Frank's story, as time becomes the evaluator.

—*Bradford L. Rauschenberg*
Senior Fellow, MESDA
April 2001

Introduction

Frank Horton is cherished by many people for many reasons. This biography, however, exists because of a few people for specific reasons. Miles and Ruth Horton's generous funding and support for the project made possible the engaging prose, resonant story, and captivating images contained in these pages. Brad Rauschenberg recognized the need for a biography of Frank many years ago and worked tenaciously to see the project through to completion. This book is a reality only because of the foresight and dedication of Miles and Ruth Horton and Brad Rauschenberg.

Penelope Niven's contribution to this project cannot be underestimated. Penny's finely honed research skills paired with her mastery of language all but guaranteed a biography that matches its subject's integrity and charisma. Old Salem and MESDA are greatly indebted to Penny for her gracious role in this undertaking.

When the *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts* was established by Frank in 1975, he envisioned it as a vehicle to disseminate the information found in the research and object files collected at MESDA. It is appropriate, therefore, that the story of Frank L. Horton has been researched, documented, and presented by the publication he created for those very purposes. His is one of the most interesting and significant research files to be found at MESDA.

As readers of this biography will find, the story of Frank Horton is inextricably linked to his mother, Theo L. Taliaferro. The establishment of MESDA is as much Theo's accomplishment as it is Frank's. The richness and vitality of this biography could not have

been attained without Theo's diaries, faithfully kept for nearly forty years. It is undeniable, then, that the biography presented here is about the two founders of MESDA: Frank L. Horton and his mother, Theo L. Taliaferro.

—*Gary J. Albert*
Director of Publications
Old Salem, Inc.

FRANK L. HORTON AND
THE ROADS TO MESDA

Frank L. Horton and the Roads to MESDA

BY PENELOPE NIVEN

Antiquarian? What *makes* one? What roads lead to MESDA?

—MILES C. HORTON, JR.

Prelude

During a lifetime of reading and writing biography, I have come to embrace a few basic biographical principles: In every childhood, as the novelist and playwright Thornton Wilder observed, there are signposts, footprints, and clues that foreshadow the adult life. History is in the blood. Character can be shaped by a thousand forces, visible and invisible. A remarkable person may create a remarkable body of work. The life and the work can be so intrinsically interwoven that it seems that the man or woman *is* the work, and, conversely, the work *is* the man or woman.

Frank Liipfert Horton is a remarkable man who has created a remarkable museum. His life and his work are so tightly interwoven that you cannot tell the story of the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts and Old Salem without telling Frank Horton's story.

Honors and awards proclaim his accomplishments, and friends and colleagues celebrate the museum and the man. He is a pioneer, an antiquarian, a collector, a researcher, a scholar, a teacher, a philanthropist. He has been called the "father and dean of southern studies in the [decorative] arts."¹

Like many others, I know this “father and dean” principally through his work, and it is in the work of his life that Frank Horton’s character and personality are most fully revealed. But if the child is father of the man, as poet William Wordsworth believed, glimpses of the boy may further illuminate the man’s work and his legacy. How did Frank Horton come by his love of history and his passion for the artifacts of the past? Who—what—empowered and sustained his work?

“My mother was my inspiration,” he has often said.² What follows, therefore, is his story, and hers.

I

Theodosia Hamlen Liipfert Horton Taliaferro was a woman ahead of her time. As a child she was a tomboy, often jealous of the liberties that his gender seemed to guarantee for her younger brother, Francis.³ They were the children of Francis Julian and Cora Hamlen Liipfert, of Winston, North Carolina. The Liipferts traced their roots to the Lüpfer family who, according to the family history, resided at least as early as 1728 on a sixty-four acre estate on steep, beautiful lands near Niederelsdorf, Germany.⁴ “Our family inheritance stands upon stately heights,” one relative wrote in the family history. “Upward! Upward!”⁵

While the old family home in Germany now lies in ruins, it has been supplanted by a “fortress-like” house that “crowns the open top of the hill, as it majestically views the distant horizon.”⁶ One family legend suggested that fifty-five of those acres may have been acquired not as a purchase, but as a settlement by a creditor.⁷ According to a family historian, the modern home place “is a well kept patriarchal estate of rare beauty and should interest the home loving instincts of the descendants.”⁸ There are vestiges of the original buildings, including a barn, a whiskey distillery, a coach house, a cow stable, a sheepfold, and a mill.

The Liipferts in Germany were an energetic, enterprising family, and those traits transplanted well to a new continent. In 1852, when



1. Ancestral Liipfert Home, Niederelsdorf, Germany (image dates from late nineteenth century). *Frank Horton Collection; hereafter FHC.*

he was just fourteen, Franz Julius Lüpfert traveled from Niederelsdorf to settle in Clarksville, Virginia, a tobacco manufacturing and market town on the Roanoke River.⁹ By 1860, the largest tobacco factory in Virginia or North Carolina was located in Clarksville. There, the Lüpfert name was transformed to Liipfert, and F. J. Liipfert grew to manhood. He married Mary Elizabeth Gilliland, and fought in the Confederate Army during the Civil War. On July 25, 1866, Mary Elizabeth Gilliland Liipfert gave birth to a son, Francis Julian Liipfert.

F. J. Liipfert, Sr. became a furniture dealer and undertaker, not incompatible professions in earlier days when cabinetmakers were often called upon to build coffins.¹⁰ “Bedsteads \$3.00 and up, and other goods equally low,” read Mr. Liipfert’s advertisement in the local newspaper, the *Clarksville Tobacco Plant*. “Can and will, and does sell everything in his line as cheap as can be had in cities.”¹¹

In January of 1885, after attending business school in Poughkeep-



2. Francis Julian Liipfert, c. 1888. *FHC*.



3. Cora Hamlen Liipfert, c. 1888. *FHC*.

sie, New York, nineteen-year-old Francis Liipfert left Clarksville for Winston, North Carolina, where he would make his fortune in tobacco. “We cannot afford to raise up young men to build up other towns,” commented the *Tobacco Plant* reporter who shared the news of young Liipfert’s departure for Winston. “Clarksville is now furnishing three first-class young men for that town.”¹²

Francis Liipfert’s first job in Winston was as bookkeeper for Brown Rogers and Company, hardware merchants. He fell in love with Cora Hamlen, the daughter of a prominent Winston tobacco manufacturer, and courted her persistently even though, he said, she had “other suitors whose present and future I frankly feel looked

better than mine.”¹³ Cora chose wisely, however, as time would tell. They were married on November 13, 1888 at 5:30 P.M. in the First Baptist Church, which, according to the newspaper account, “was thronged by people eager to witness the marriage of Miss Cora Hamlen to Mr. F. J. Liipfert.” Afterwards, the couple left by train on a “bridal tour.” Both young people were reported to be “well known and admired” by many friends.¹⁴

In 1890 the groom joined his father-in-law in the manufacturing of tobacco, and the firm was soon renamed Hamlen, Liipfert and Company. When Mr. Hamlen retired in 1896, Francis Liipfert formed Liipfert, Scales and Company, a tobacco business partnership with James S. Scales, James K. Norfleet, and Robert C. Norfleet. They later sold their company to R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company at a handsome profit, including generous stock options.



4. Liipfert-Scales Company, c. 1900, 602 Cherry St., Winston, NC. *FHC*.



5. Cora and Theo Liipfert, c. 1898. *FHC.*



6. Francis Julian Liipfert, Jr., c. 1903. *FHC.*



7. Liipfert House at 603 W. Fourth St.,
Winston, NC, c. 1900. *FHC.*



8. Liipfert House at 512 W. Fifth St., Winston-Salem, NC, c. 1920s. The Liipfert House is located at the top right corner of this image. In the foreground is the First Baptist Church and at the top left is the Poindexter House (moved to 130 West End Blvd, Winston-Salem, when the Integon Building was constructed). *Courtesy of Forsyth County Public Library Photograph Collection.*

The Liipferts' first child was born December 17, 1891, and christened Theodosia Hamlen Liipfert. Their second child, Francis Julian Liipfert, Jr., was born on September 10, 1897. When the children were young, the family lived at 603 West 4th Street in Winston. Later, they moved to a larger house at 512 West 5th Street.¹⁵ In addition to devoting herself to her family and to good causes in her community, Cora Hamlen Liipfert collected antiques and filled her spacious



9. Liipfert Family, c.
1908. *FHC*.

house with them.¹⁶ Consequently, young Theo Liipfert, granddaughter of an immigrant furniture dealer, grew up surrounded by the graceful tables, elegant cabinets, and finely carved and burnished woods that were evidence of her mother's knowledge and love of beautiful antiques.

The Liipferts were strict parents. "You know how our hearts are wrapped up in your present and your future," Francis Liipfert wrote to his son. "My evening prayer is that you may so live that the world will be better on account of your life. I firmly believe that this is the motto that should be a guiding influence in each young man and each young woman's life: 'What can I do to make the world better, what can I do to help those not so fortunate in life as I.'"¹⁷

Theo, the tomboy, evolved into a bright, beautiful, headstrong

young woman. On December 17, 1913, her twenty-first birthday, she married Miles Christopher Horton, a thirty-seven-year-old physician practicing in Raleigh, North Carolina. A graduate of the Medical College of Virginia, Dr. Horton had first studied dentistry and, after further study, later specialized in surgery of the eye, ear, nose, and throat.¹⁸ Family memories and records do not reveal how the couple met.

Dr. Horton was the son of Sidney Horton, a farmer and real estate dealer in Wake County, North Carolina. Sidney Horton and his wife Cornelia built a house on his family's land in the village of Wakefield, North Carolina, eighteen miles east of Raleigh. They were parents of eleven children, three of whom died before adulthood.

The Hortons traced their family roots to New York and then to England. According to the family history, "The headquarters of Caesar's army was near Leicester, England, the town from which our ancestors came, and the Horton name has been known there since the most remote period of any authentic records. Therefore, it seems that the family was of Roman origin."¹⁹ Sidney Horton's line is said to have descended from Barnabas Horton of Mousely, England, who traveled to America with his family and other Puritan leaders and their families sometime between 1632 and 1635. These members of "a duly organized civil and religious body" established a Congregational Church on Long Island, and lived "in more or less harmonious relations and peace for generations."²⁰



10. Theo Liipfert (age 12), 1903. *FHC*.



11. Dr. Miles C. Horton, c. 1903. *FHC*.

Barnabas Horton was a champion of civil and religious freedom, a magistrate and a member of the General Court of New Haven and Hartford, and the builder of the first frame dwelling on the east end of Long Island. The house stood as late as 1875, still occupied by members of the Horton family and simultaneously used as a courthouse. It has been called "probably the oldest wood house in America."²¹

It was David Horton, grandson of Barnabas Horton, who migrated to North Carolina in May 1779 when he received a 400-acre land grant. In June 1779, according to family records, he "patented a tract of 557 acres near the present community of Wakefield, in the eastern section of Wake Co. on Long Branch."²² David Horton died in 1784, after bequeathing his possessions, including more than 700 acres of land, to his wife and twelve children. The Horton family motto was "Quod Vult, Valde, Vult": What he wills, he wills cordially and without stint.²³

David Horton's descendants lived on in Wake County for generations. By the 1880s, the children of David Horton's great-great grandson Sidney Horton, including Miles Christopher Horton, were being educated in the strict Wakefield Classical and Mathematical School, a private boarding school in their hometown. The location was ideal, according to the school's literature, because of "Its freedom from malarial diseases, the high-toned morals of its citizens, its singular freedom from temptation to idleness and vice. . . ."²⁴ Sidney Horton served on the school's Board of Trustees, and watched proudly as three of his sons went on from Wakefield to



12. Miles Christopher
Horton, Jr. (age 4),
c. 1920. *FHC*.

become physicians.²⁵ Sidney and Cornelia Horton's sons were handsome as well as accomplished.²⁶ Family photographs capture their dark hair and intense eyes. Dr. Miles Horton and his young bride made a striking couple, and they settled in Raleigh after their wedding, in December 1913. Even after she was married, Theo's father sent her a generous monthly allowance, most of which she decided to save so that she could buy an automobile. She chose a Model T Ford, which she would crank herself.



13. Frank
Liipfert Horton
(age 18 months),
c. 1919. *FHC*.

The Hortons' first child, Miles Christopher, Jr., was born in Raleigh on August 7, 1916. The baby had a hair lip and a cleft palate, a deformity some attributed to the fact that Theo Horton had cranked her Model T while she was pregnant.²⁷ When the child was about two years old, Dr. Horton took him to Atlanta so that a skilled plastic surgeon could correct the problem.²⁸

Frank Liipfert Horton, the Hortons' second child, was born March 21, 1918. One of his older brother's earliest memories was of Frank as a "babe-in-arms" taking no interest in the toys his parents gave him, but finding a packet of pins, dumping them in a crack in the floor, and spending hours happily "picking the pins out of the crack."²⁹

Pictures in the family album show two smiling little boys playing in the snow, or in the garden in spring, sometimes accompanied by



14. Theo Liipfert
Horton, early 1920s.
FHC.

pets and playmates. In other snapshots, the brothers explore Occaneechi Island Farm, the family farm on Occaneechi Island in Halifax County, Virginia, near Clarksville. The Liipfert family gathered at Occaneechi Island Farm for summer vacations and other holidays. "We are delighted to know that you all are going to be with us during this happy season," Theo's father wrote to Dr. Horton in December of 1920, adding that he hoped "that nothing will prevent us all from being together Christmas week."³⁰

By the time Frank Horton was five years old, however, his parents had decided to separate. In July of 1923, Theo Liipfert Horton took her two little boys home to her parents' house at 512 West Fifth Street in Winston-Salem.³¹ It was a difficult homecoming, with a marriage in disarray and two mischievous sons in tow. Theo's parents had been firm about her upbringing, and now that they were older the anrics

15. Miles (age 6)
and Frank (age 4)
Horton, c. 1922.
FHC.



of two young grandsons altered their staid daily routine, especially since Mr. Liipfert had retired in 1915 because of failing health. Theo's brother referred to Miles, Jr. and Frank as "Theo's Brats."³²

Cora Liipfert tried to impose discipline when she felt Theo was not firm enough with her boys. Cora sometimes dressed her grandsons in "Little Lord Fauntleroy" clothes, Miles remembered, and took them to ride in the country in her "gas-gulping auto."³³ When



16. Miles and Frank Horton
and pal, c. 1921, Occaneechi
Island Farm. *FHC*.



17. Frank Horton (age 4 or 5), c. 1923.
FHC.

18. Theo L. Horton,
Occaneechi Island Farm,
1925. *FHC*.



the boys started to school, their grandmother kept an attentive eye on their progress. They had to learn their multiplication tables even if they had to miss dinner to do so. As they grew up, Miles and Frank were close companions as well as partners in crime, and their mischief often embarrassed their grandmother. One escapade led them to climb to the top of a nearby church steeple to smoke cigars. They had borrowed a paring knife from their grandmother's kitchen to cut the cigars, and only when they were safely at home that night did they realized they had forgotten the purloined knife. Miles and Frank slipped back to the steeple in the darkness to retrieve it. When their indiscretions were discovered, their grandmother was not amused.³⁴

Their mother, to the contrary, was a "free spirit" who did not want to "be reined in on anything she did." She was a "very strong-willed person," and, by all accounts, a good mother.³⁵ Nevertheless,



19. Frank Horton (age 6 or 7), 1924–25, school photograph from 1st grade class, Wiley School, Winston-Salem. FHC.

in later years, both her sons would chafe at her strong presence in their lives. In 1950, Theo wrote in her diary, “Seems the boys have agreed that they are entirely a product of my domineering disposition, and victims of having been brought up by women, women, women.”¹⁰

But in their early years, she certainly gave her sons more latitude than their grandparents did, especially in the summertime when the family stayed at Occaneechi Island Farm. Theo understood their need to be boys, to run, play, and explore. There they enjoyed the

freedom of the out of doors. Frank and Miles spent much of one frightening summer confined in the hospital in Virginia being treated for colitis. Most summers seemed idyllic, however. Sometimes Frank and Miles pretended to be Native American warriors, and once a playmate tossed an improvised "spear" in Frank's direction and hit him in the head.³⁷ The blow left a scar on the left side of Frank's forehead, a scar he is said to be "quite proud of."³⁸ Miles Horton joked in later years that Frank "started collecting 'knots' on his head long before he collected furniture."³⁹

Frank suffered a more serious head injury as a boy. He was in elementary school at the time, and he had a girlfriend. One day he was playing in the street near his grandparents' house in Winston-Salem when he stumbled and fell. A passing Model T Ford ran over his head, leaving him unconscious. Fortunately, the Model T weighed far less than its larger, modern counterparts. (The Model T touring car in the twenties carried a shipping weight of 1,485 pounds, compared to a contemporary Ford Taurus that weighs an average of 3,343.5 pounds.)⁴⁰ Otherwise, this could have been a much more serious encounter. As it was, Frank was hospitalized for a mild concussion, but suffered no permanent injury from the accident.

The irony of it all, Frank noted in later years, was that the car was driven by his girlfriend's parents.⁴¹ According to Miles, the episode led Frank Horton "to swear off girls at once."⁴²



Like her paternal grandfather and her mother, Theo Horton collected antiques, often driving out into the country to search and shop for them, and eventually opening her own antiques shop, first in South Hill, Virginia, and then in Clarksville. As a boy, Frank would accompany her on those jaunts, climbing into the rumble seat and scanning the roadside for Coca-Cola bottles and other items that he could sell. At his request, his mother would stop the car and Frank would clamber out of the rumble seat to gather up



20. Frank Horton (age 10), 1928. *FHC*.

any profitable debris he could scavenge from the side of the road. He was already an instinctive collector, and, because stamps had caught his fancy, he invested the proceeds of his sales in his growing stamp collection.⁴³

Frank often went with his mother to Richmond, Virginia, to do business with J. K. Beard, a highly knowledgeable and respected antiques dealer. In Mr. Beard's shop stood a handsome mahogany hoof-footed bedstead, crafted in Bath, North Carolina, sometime between 1710 and 1740. Frank would listen, wide-eyed, as Mr. Beard told him tales about how the pirate Blackbeard had once owned this very bed. Many years later, after Mr. Beard died, Frank Horton bought Blackbeard's hoof-footed bed from the Beard estate sale. By then, he himself was an expert and able to deduce that the bed, old and rare as it was, had been made three or four decades after Blackbeard died.⁴⁴ Even so, Mr. Beard's mesmerizing story, fabricated though it was, captured the gullible boy's imagination. These antiques his mother collected resonated with *history*. There were stories lurking in the grain of the wood. Eventually, Frank would collect those stories for himself, and authentic ones at that.



By the time Miles was twelve and Frank was ten, tragedy had struck the family several times over. Francis Liipfert, Theo's father and the grandfather who had been a loving if stern surrogate father to her two boys, died at home on April 2, 1927 after a long illness. He was sixty years old, a civic leader, a trustee of the Thomasville, North Carolina Childrens' Home, and, for a number of years, secretary of the Winston-Salem and Forsyth County Fair Association. In that role, he administered the county fair, bringing to the task his experience as a successful business man and gentleman farmer. For years, he had supervised a successful cattle breeding operation and a dairy on his farm on Occaneechi Island. Under his guidance, the Forsyth County Fair expanded to become the largest of its kind in

North Carolina. He was eulogized as a man of “wise counsel” and “inspiring presence,” a man of “outstanding ability, full of zeal and earnestness—keen minded and capable, friendly and sincere.”⁴⁵

Then Theo’s brother Frank died tragically and unexpectedly on June 2, 1928 of peritonitis and other complications following emergency surgery for appendicitis.⁴⁶ He was only thirty-one years old, a gifted young man, full of promise. He had served in the American Expeditionary Force during World War I, although he was never sent overseas. After graduating in 1920 from the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, where he wrote for the college magazine, Frank Liipfert went to law school at Columbia University. In 1923, with his law degree in hand, he returned to Winston-Salem to work as a lawyer at R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company. He had to resign from that position in 1926 because of serious vision problems. Frank Liipfert was in Richmond, Virginia when he was struck with appendicitis, and underwent two surgeries in Union Memorial Hospital in Richmond, where he died.⁴⁷ His heartbroken mother, who had traveled to Richmond to be with him, returned from Richmond seriously ill with pneumonia.

A joint eulogy for father and son noted that Frank Liipfert was “called suddenly in the very morning of life.” He was a “worthy son of his father,” and a man of “rare intellect” with the ability “to make his mark in the world . . . had he been spared.”⁴⁸

In the summer of 1928, Frank and Miles Horton’s father was gravely injured in a hotel fire in Raleigh. Dr. Miles Horton had been living in the historic Yarborough House Hotel at 323-327 Fayetteville Street in Raleigh, near the office at 135 Fayetteville Street where he practiced medicine.⁴⁹ On the night of July 3, 1928, fire swept through the hotel. Dr. Horton jumped from the window of his room to escape, and suffered injuries that left him permanently disabled. Although he continued to practice medicine, he was no longer able to perform surgery.

The final ordeal of that dark period came on November 13, 1928, when, after five years of separation, Theo was divorced from Dr.



21. Francis Julian Liipfert, Jr., c. 1920. *FHC*.

Horton and awarded custody of Miles and Frank.⁵⁰ Theo and her sons remained with her grieving mother in Winston-Salem, where the boys were settled in school.

They continued to live in Winston-Salem after Theo's mother died on August 19, 1932, after a long illness. Cora Hamlen Liipfert had never fully recovered from the loss of her son. She was sixty-four at the time of her death. Her obituary noted her Salem College

education, her lifetime of good works, and her legacy as a member of one of the city's "most prominent pioneer families."⁵¹



As had been true since Frank and Miles were born, summers and holidays were still spent at Occaneechi Island Farm, at the juncture of the Staunton and Dan Rivers. The island farm sat on a "narrow strip of land" several miles long, with a width of a half-mile at the upper end and less than a hundred feet at the bridge entrance to the farm.⁵² Years earlier, Theo's father had established his ambitious farm operation on the island, running a dairy and breeding registered Aberdeen-Angus cattle, Duroc-Jersey hogs, and Shropshire sheep.⁵³

In the years following her father's death, and then her brother's, Theo grew increasingly involved in the management of the farm. While her sons loved spending time at the farm, neither seemed destined to be a farmer. Miles, who had been a high school student in Winston-Salem and then at Woodberry Forest School in Orange County, Virginia, was fascinated with science, in part because of his father's influence and in part because of Flossy Martin, his catalytic science teacher at Reynolds High School. Over the years, Miles and Frank frequently saw their father, who still lived in a hotel in Raleigh and practiced medicine. Occasionally, Dr. Horton took his sons on trips. Theo did not entirely approve of Dr. Horton's efforts to encourage Miles toward a career in science. When Dr. Horton gave Miles the money to purchase a microscope, Theo objected, but Miles bought the instrument anyway.⁵⁴

While Frank was an average student, Miles excelled, winning a debating medal and other awards in high school.⁵⁵ Miles's interest in biology was matched by Frank's interest in business and his growing knowledge of antiques, gained in his informal apprenticeship as his mother's companion on shopping expeditions around the Virginia and North Carolina countryside, and his work with her in her an-



22. Frank Horton, late 1930s, South Hill antique shop on Highway US 1. *FHC.*

tiques shop, first in South Hill, Virginia and then in Clarksville. Frank had been put in charge of making the sign for the first shop in South Hill. "ANTIQUES," he wrote, omitting the "U." "I didn't know any better," he said years later.⁵⁶

He understood and appreciated antiques even before he could spell the word, however. When the woman running the first South Hill shop for Theo proved to be unsatisfactory, Theo put Frank in charge as clerk. Sometime later, when Theo decided to let Frank run the shop, he moved it to a better location on Highway US 1, about three miles south of South Hill. Yellowing family snapshots show Frank in a proprietary stance, his lanky frame outlined in the doorway of his first antiques shop.

Back in his high school days in Winston-Salem, after Frank had learned to drive, he could venture out on an occasional independent

quest for treasures. "I remember the time when I first started driving. When I first learned to drive, I had my mother's car, and I drove around a curve, and there was a streetcar coming. I ran into it. I was young, and I was real concerned. I got out and the streetcar conductor got out, and we looked at my car. He said, 'Don't worry about it, young man. The car's just scunt up a bit.' That's the first time I ever heard that word used. And we parted company. I drove my car on, and the conductor drove the street car on . . . It was my mother's car. She owned everything."⁵⁷



By 1935, Theo Horton had decided to close the Occaneechi Island Farm dairy business and concentrate on raising beef cattle. She hired Jack Bunce Taliaferro to manage the farm for her. On her behalf, Taliaferro hired workmen, oversaw the construction of farm buildings and dwellings, bought livestock and farm equipment, orchestrated road repairs during the frequent floods that inundated Occaneechi Island, and supervised fifteen to twenty farm employees.⁵⁸

Theo Horton had devoted her adult life to bringing up her sons. Although she had inherited a large estate from her parents, she often worried during those Depression years about how best to manage her resources. Her antiques shop was a hobby more than a profitable business, and she was relieved to turn over the headaches of managing the farm to her farm manager. Even in the midst of the Depression, the farm had to be properly maintained, flood-damaged roads and structures had to be restored, and new buildings had to go up as needed.

Miles and Frank liked Jack Taliaferro, who spent more and more time with the family. They enjoyed playing cards, and all of them loved motion pictures. It was not uncommon, according to Theo's diary, for the group to see three or four movies a week. With her boys almost ready to leave the nest, Theo needed a fuller life of her

23. Frank, Theo, and Miles Horton, 1934. *FHC*.



own. Jack Taliaferro came from an old Virginia family. (Genealogical research seemed to support the speculation that the first Taliaferro to settle in Virginia was Robert Talafero or Tolliver, the grandson of Bartholomew Taliaferro, “a subject of the Duke of Venice, who settled in London and was made denizen in March 1562.”)⁵⁹ Jack was handsome, charming, debonair. He took Theo to dinner parties and dances in Clarksville and Winston-Salem. Theo Horton was falling in love.

But her sons had always come first. An outstanding student, Miles had gone on to the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, where he was a student in 1936. When Frank received his high school diploma from R. J. Reynolds High School in Winston-Salem in 1935, his transcript recorded Bs and Cs in English, history, mathematics, science, and typewriting.⁶⁰ During his high school career, Frank earned two As, one in civics and one in elementary algebra.⁶¹ His overall average was not high enough for recommendation for college admission. That is most likely why his mother enrolled him in a preparatory school program during the 1935–1936 academic year. Theo sent Frank to Augusta Military Academy at Fort Defiance, Virginia, probably to improve his grade average so he could go



24. Jack and Theo
Taliaferro, c. 1936. *FHC*.

on to college.⁶² At Augusta, he took courses in English, history, college algebra, and German.

On January 2, 1936, just after the Christmas vacation, Theo and Frank drove Miles back to school in Chapel Hill. "Told the boys I was to be married," Theo noted in her diary that day.⁶³ On January 8, with both of her sons present, Theo Horton and Jack Taliaferro were married in the Chapel Hill Baptist Church. Soon afterward, the Taliaferros set out on a honeymoon trip to Cuba. Back in the United States, they divided their time between Winston-Salem and Occaneechi Island, where the farm had just been inundated with one of the perennial floods that swept the island.

In March of 1936, Theo decided to buy Kinderton, a farm on high ground about a mile from the bridge leading to the Occaneechi Island Farm. Not only was this farm better protected from ravaging flood waters, but it surrounded a spacious, historic house. Theo bought the house with all its furnishings, as well as all the livestock and farm equipment on the place.⁶⁴ On April 9, 1936, she wrote in her diary, "I drove to Fort Defiance and brought Frank Horton back. Frank had a big surprise at the purchase of Kinderton."⁶⁵

Frank spent the summer of 1936 at home at Kinderton, often going antiquing with his mother, who made notes in her diary about their expeditions and purchases. "Frank bought Bach. [sic] chest for 10.00," she wrote in the August 16, 1936 entry, noting proudly that he immediately sold the piece for \$50.00.⁶⁶ Another trip, this time to South Hill, Virginia, yielded a "nice table and large Waterford glass vase," as well as "two cute figurines."⁶⁷ Mother and son rambled for miles in their hunt for antiques, not only for their shop, but for the Kinderton house. Frank had his mother's eye for the hidden treasures in dusty shop corners. Mile by country mile, table by table, vase by vase, Theo was educating her son in the lexicon and lore of antique furnishings, and he relished the challenge of the hunt. Now and then, he would go off on his own—sometimes, his mother fretted, on a wild goose chase. But all in all, she was pleased with her son's growing knowledge, and they enjoyed their treks together.

On August 31, 1936, their first Kinderton summer came to an end. Both Frank and Miles were now enrolled in the New Mexico Military Institute in Roswell, New Mexico. At the University of North Carolina, Miles's growing interest in science had apparently been surpassed by his interest in cars and girls, and he flunked out.⁶⁸ Consequently, both Horton brothers were now cadets entering the junior college program at the New Mexico Military Institute. The program would keep them in New Mexico nearly twelve months a year, and the distance precluded their traveling home more than twice yearly.⁶⁹

The New Mexico Military Institute, founded in 1891, boasted a program that emphasized discipline, integrity, honor, and the pursuit of excellence. Frank Horton seemed to thrive on the regimen at the Institute, and his grades improved accordingly. In addition to his courses in military science and tactics, and his ROTC training, he studied economics, German, English composition and rhetoric, and accounting, earning As in economics and accounting. During his second year, he concentrated on business courses—economics, labor problems and marketing, salesmanship, business law, account-

ing, marketing, advertising, and the mathematics of finance. He was assigned to the cavalry, and his favorite hours were spent riding horseback through the nearby desert.⁷⁰ Frank also enjoyed forays into Mexico with his friends.⁷¹ He and Miles were exposed to classical music and art at the Institute, and Miles especially enjoyed studying with Paul Horgan, who had been a student at the Institute from 1920 to 1923.⁷²

Horgan and his family had moved to New Mexico in 1915, when he was twelve. When Miles and Frank arrived at the Institute, Horgan had been working there for ten years as a librarian. He was also becoming an accomplished novelist, poet, and essayist. His first novel was published in 1933; a second appeared in 1936 and a third in 1938. Horgan wrote sympathetically about the native inhabitants of the American Southwest, and won two Pulitzer Prizes in history, first in 1954 and then in 1975.⁷³ His eclectic interests included music and art, as well as literature and history. Horgan was Miles's mentor in music and art, and his influence helped to shape Miles's enduring interests. In later years, Miles Horton painted and became a serious collector of art. Also, like Paul Horgan, he worked as a librarian.

Meanwhile, in his quarters in the barracks of the New Mexico Military Institute, Frank appeared to be testing some of the tactics he was learning in Commerce 13, "Salesmanship." He went into business for himself. As Miles remembered it, Frank "quickly developed a Shylock-loan-shark business among students—lending a hard-up boy \$1.00 on Saturday, and collecting \$1.50 the following Saturday—works out to a mere 2,500%!!!"⁷⁴

According to family legend, Frank also set up a trading post in his room, swapping and trading goods, or buying uniforms, cigarettes, supplies, and other items from the



25. Frank Horton, 1936–37. New Mexico Military Institute. *FHC*.



26. Frank Horton, 1936–37, New Mexico Military Institute. *FHC*.

Institute's PX and then re-selling them at higher prices. Said Miles, "Frank developed an ability to TRADE and SWAP while in New Mexico, which has since been the despair of antique dealers and friends alike! He almost drove the PX at the military school out of business—they came to him in tears and told him to cease and desist—or ship out! Frank went underground!"⁵



With her sons involved in their lives and studies at the New Mexico Military Institute, Theo set off with her husband in September of 1937 on a seven-month-long grand tour. They sailed from New York on the *SS Britannic* on September 18, and spent the autumn months touring England, Ireland, Germany, France, and Greece. In December they traveled to Egypt, spending Christmas and part of January in Cairo. Theo's diary pages brim with details about the journey, including antiquities she purchased in shops and bazaars strung from Egypt to India, China, and Japan. After their tour of the Far East, the Taliaferros arrived in San Francisco on April 28, 1938. They were back at home in Virginia in early May.

Frank Horton was graduated from the Junior College of the New Mexico Military Institute on May 31, 1938. That fall he and Miles set out on the train for New York, where Miles would enroll at Columbia University and Frank would become a student at the Pace Institute, a business college founded in 1906 by Homer and Charles Pace to train "men and women who aspired to a better life."⁶ The Pace brothers concentrated on teaching principles of accounting and business law. (Pace Institute became Pace College in 1948, and Pace University in 1973.)

After two years in the desert, the Horton brothers now shared quarters in Manhattan at the Hotel Mansfield at 12 West 44th Street, about halfway between Columbia and Pace. It was “quite a swanky looking dump,” Frank wrote to Theo. “Three doormen are on duty at all times and you can’t come up on the elevator without a coat on.”⁷⁷ The brothers quickly found an apartment at 171 West 71st Street and began to adjust to their new life in the city. They lived over a cafeteria, right at the express subway stop, and there was a restaurant around the corner, said Miles, that specialized in southern cooking. Still, they were homesick. “I miss you like the devil,” Miles wrote to his mother.⁷⁸

Frank got lost in the subway at first, but soon navigated the city with ease. Both brothers enjoyed theater—they especially liked a performance of George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart’s Pulitzer-Prize-winning play, *You Can’t Take It with You*—and Frank went to the opera.⁷⁹ At Columbia one day, Miles bumped into Teina Baumstone, an antique dealer who was a friend of Theo’s, and she soon asked Frank to work for her at a New York antiques exhibition, a chance he seized.

But his semester at Pace got off to a rough start. To his dismay, none of his credits from New Mexico Military Institute were accepted by Pace, and he was forced to start his college program all over again. “They did grant me the privilege of taking an exam for English and history, but I could not pass if I tried,” Frank wrote to his mother; “so I didn’t try. I’ve had no history for three years and I have never been good in English. I was required to start over in accounting, law and math, as they considered them so important. All of the subjects have proven quite boring so far. I suppose they will pick up before long, however.”⁸⁰



27. Jack and Theo Taliaferro abroad, c. 1937. FHC.



28. Theo Taliaferro after a successful turkey hunt at Kinder-ton, late 1930s. *FHC*.

Over the years, Frank's letters to his mother reveal the contours of their close relationship. As a divorced woman, bereft of her father and her brother, Theo had clearly relied on her younger son's sturdy common sense, despite his youth and relative inexperience. Even during her second marriage, she frequently turned to Frank rather than to her husband for advice, support, and practical assistance with business matters, whether related to antiques or cattle. This was especially true during Theo's world tour with Jack, and in the months afterward, when her husband began to suffer from frequent illnesses and periods of despondency. In the fall of 1938, Theo was apparently considering moving her shop from Clarksville to Kinder-ton, and solicited Frank's opinion.

"Just what to do about the antique situation . . . I really can't say," he answered in a letter. "Unless you want a big job and a lot of worry trying to dispose of the things, I advise you to leave them in the shop until I get home. If we are to have an auction I think the best location to be South Hill since it is more centrally located and there are more people who would come and bid at the auction. You'd better let it run as is until I get home. . . ." ⁸¹

Whether he knew it then or not, Frank's feet were already firmly planted on the path leading to his life's work. Wherever he went, he looked for antiques. He was already making the rounds of Manhattan antique shops, comparing prices. "When pricing antiques in N.Y.C. [sic] I find that Bible boxes similar to mine sell for around \$150.00," he reported to his mother. Bored with his course work, Frank found it much more interesting to explore Manhattan antique shops, and to help out at the antiques exhibition, the largest he had ever seen. He paid his first visit to the Metropolitan Museum, but was disappointed, most likely because he had heard so much about it. "There are quite a few fine examples of furniture there, however," he said, "and they warrant study, which I shall do on my weekends."⁸²

Unfortunately, within two weeks of their arrival in New York, Miles was so sick that he could not attend classes. A bad cold resulted in a dreadful earache and other respiratory problems, and he could not get well. Alarmed by her son's lingering illness, Theo made arrangements to take him to a specialist in Baltimore, Maryland, and she and Jack Taliaferro immediately drove to Baltimore. "Met Miles," Theo wrote in her diary October 4, 1938. "He has lost 11 lbs. & looks awful."⁸³ The specialist who examined Miles the next day admitted him to Union Memorial Hospital for several days of observation. "Poor kid, it nearly broke my heart to leave him in the hospital with a thermometer in his mouth," Theo wrote October 5.⁸⁴

Miles wrote to his mother about his ordeal:

Dearest Mother: That blamed ear started getting bad just after you left me, and for four days they've been giving me morphine to quiet me down and let me sleep. On Saturday night, a doctor lanced it in about three places and it's been draining and feeling better ever since. I've never had such a long drawn out earache before, and heaven forbid that it ever happens again. I thought my day had come. Meantime, I've been through every test under the sun . . . the nurses have been swell to me, and the food is grand.⁸⁵

When Miles was discharged from the hospital several days later, he returned to Virginia to recover and never did resume his studies at Columbia. Frank stayed on at the Pace Institute, however, working conscientiously at his courses in accounting and business law. He told Theo, "My ears have finally become accustomed to the noise. I'm afraid I won't be able to sleep at home because of the quiet."⁸⁰

At Kinderton, Theo worried about Frank's academic work, his laundry, and his schedule. In New York, Frank worried about his mother's business affairs, her health, and her tendency to overdo. He missed his mother and his brother, but he kept himself busy. He visited the aquarium and the Bronx Zoo, as well as Ellis Island and Staten Island, but his primary amusement in the big city was to haunt the antique shops and attend auctions. He wrote faithful letters to his mother, signing them affectionately: "All the love there is to the sweetest mother there is," he wrote at the end of an undated letter that fall.⁸¹ On October 23, 1938, Frank wrote,

Just sitting—that's me—for the lack of anything else to do. I'm really bored with studies. Nothing seems hard enough to be interesting, though English and history could stand a bit of my boring time . . . There's a damn good auction coming up tomorrow at 2:00 at the American Art [sic]. I wish I could attend. I would skip my last class if it were anything else than my most worrisome subject, history. This is the best auction I've seen yet in New York.⁸²

Frank had no way of knowing in 1938, of course, that he would one day command national respect for his mastery of history, his "most worrisome subject." Students discouraged in certain fields of academic endeavor might take heart from the knowledge that as young men, the poet Carl Sandburg flunked English grammar and the antiquarian Frank Horton struggled with his history courses.

Meanwhile, at home in Kinderton, Theo recorded in her diary for autumn 1938 the purchases she made on the antiquing excursions that filled much of her time. "Got a good gold leaf frame with

nice picture, 'Home from 1st Voyage,' for 4.00, two good Waterford glass lamps, mates for 12.00. . . ."⁸⁹

She also wrote anxiously in her diary that fall about her husband. Jack Taliaferro was not in good health. On occasion, he drank too much. He had lost interest in the farm operation, so much so that Theo wrote to get Frank's advice about when and whether to sell the cattle.⁹⁰ For several months, Jack had apparently been deeply worried about unspecified problems—lingering circumstances that had existed in his life prior to his marriage to Theo.

November 3, 1938, Theo wrote, was "A day full of worries" for Jack. "His burdens are so heavy."⁹¹ Nevertheless, Theo went to her shop that day, and reported with pleasure that she sold some antiques to a couple from Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Back home, she found her husband extremely low in spirit. They were very close, and Theo wanted to help. Before dinner, they lay down together to rest and they talked for a time about his troubles.

Jack Taliaferro had no appetite, and declined to go down to the dining room with Theo. Just as she finished her dinner, she heard a gunshot.

"He lived only a couple of hours," she wrote later. "My heart is breaking."⁹²



Distraught after her husband's death, Theo Horton Taliaferro immediately threw herself into travel, work, and the familiar rituals of collecting antiques. She and Miles decided to drive Frank back to New York soon after the funeral. "Shopped all day," Theo wrote November 9. "Frank & I went to Radio City Music Hall & Miles to see 'Our Town'—a play." Soon Theo and Miles returned to Virginia. "Frank hated to say good-by," she wrote, "and so did I."⁹³

"It was a bitter homecoming," Theo wrote of her return to Kinderton. "The nearer I got the more I dreaded it. My darling has been in my mind & heart every minute today. I've got to stand it

but don't see how I can."⁹⁴ She could not imagine how she could stay on at Kinderton, where "every room, every chair, everything reminds me of the happy days we had together."⁹⁵ He would have been forty-two years old on November 15.

The tragic events of the autumn of 1938 shaped and reshaped lives for the Horton family. Illness forced Miles to relinquish his pursuit of a degree from Columbia. Back home in Virginia, he fell in love with Julia Caroline Heick, whose father, W. F. Heick, now looked after some of the farm enterprises for Theo.⁹⁶ Miles and Julia would be married February 4, 1939, in Raleigh, North Carolina. At times before and after her marriage, Julia worked for Theo in her antique shop, often choosing to take her earnings in furniture rather than money.⁹⁷

Frank Horton, now twenty, finished the year at Pace, where, as his friend James A. Gray, Jr. would later say, he "learned to add, subtract, and multiply antiques."⁹⁸ Then Frank went home to Kinderton.

His mother had turned forty-seven on December 17, 1938. She confided in her diary of her fears of living the remainder of her life alone. More than ever, Theo needed Frank's company, his advice, and his practical help with the shop, the farm, and her daily existence. Except for his stint in the Navy during World War II, they would be companions for the rest of her life.

II

"My mother was my inspiration," Frank Horton has said more than once, when asked how his remarkable career began.⁹⁹ He simply followed her around while she collected antiques, he says with customary understatement.

By the late 1930s, after enduring a brief and unhappy interval working in a bank, Frank became a full-time partner with his mother in the antiques business, first in South Hill Virginia, and then in Clarksville.¹⁰⁰ For a time, Theo also owned a car agency, and Frank

sold insurance.¹⁰¹ Taliaferro and Horton advertised their antiques business nationally. More and more frequently, with increasing confidence and authority, Frank struck out on his own quests for furniture and art objects.¹⁰² He had learned valuable techniques from his antiques junkets with his mother. Often they would simply walk up to the house of strangers, knock on the door, and ask if there were old pieces of furniture for sale.¹⁰³ While Theo tended to be an impulsive buyer, Frank was a conscientious collector. With the instincts of a detective, he began to research and carefully record the origins and the history of the pieces he bought. A long list, for instance, had documented his purchases during the summer of 1937:

Pickle jug	2.00
Pine seaman's chest [to keep]	12.50
Early Dutch chair [to keep]	3.50
Waterford decanter	5.00
Purple glass with flower	ten cents
Walnut table	50.00
Inlaid walnut table	10.00
Kitten andirons	3.00
Mahogany inlaid card table	135.00

The list went on to fill one and a half legal pages.¹⁰⁴

More than once, Frank related the story about the day when he was antiques by himself as a very young man and he wound up with a table and a chicken.

He told it this way many years later, in a television interview with William Friday:

This was many years ago and I was a very young person and I went up this dirt road into this old farmhouse and there sat an old gentleman on the front porch and here was this little corner table with Queen Anne pad feet and so on



29. Frank Horton in front of the Clarksville, VA, antique shop, 1941. FHC.

and I was very much carried away with it. And of course, you don't ever want to make an offer for anything if you can avoid it. So I asked him what he would take for it and he says, "You can just have it, son."

And I said, "No, sir, I ought to pay you something for it."

He said, "How about fifty cents?"

I was a little in shock and I said, "All right." So I bought it and loaded it in the car—and my conscience began to get the best of me. I knew I would buy something from him that he knew the value of . . . Mother had told me to bring a chicken home, so we caught a chicken and he tied the feet up and I put it in the back of the car, and paid him his price for it and drove off. I got down the road, and I turned the chicken loose. I don't know what he thought when that chicken came running back down the way. But, anyway, I sold the table the same day. Wish I had it back now!¹⁰⁵

Frank told a journalist in 1986 that he sold the fifty-cent table that very same afternoon for \$150.00. "Today it would be worth about \$10,000.00," he added.¹⁰⁶ To reveal the monetary value of an object to people outside the museum is out of character for Frank Horton. In reality, he is a very discreet buyer who has seldom been heard to boast about a purchase.¹⁰⁷

Over the years, Theo Horton Taliaferro cultivated many tradesmen as she searched for goods for her home or her antiques shop, and Frank also came to know them well. They frequently traded in Richmond, Virginia with Charles Navis, a second-generation dealer, or J. K. Beard, the dealer for Frank's hoof-footed bedstead, who specialized in major estate sales and southern antiquities; with Willis Stallings in Littleton, North Carolina; and with Pattie Pullen Anderson in South Hill, Virginia. As a mark of their respect, when Theo and Frank were evaluating certain pieces, they would ask, "What does Charlie Navis say?"¹⁰⁸

Theo's diaries frequently mention her dealings with Pattie Anderson, sometimes with appreciation, and often with exasperation. Flamboyant and independent, Pattie could drive a hard bargain, especially during the Depression when money was scarce and she was supporting her elderly father and her two dogs, Willis and Mule.¹⁰⁹

She was also notorious as a terrible cook. As one of Frank's friends told it, "Miss Patty [sic] . . . was a dreadful cook, and the prospect of having to sit down to a lunch of greens that had been simmering in pork fat since sun-up could quell the enthusiasm of even the hardest antiquer. In all probability, Frank's wallet and stomach both suffered when he purchased [an] early eastern North Carolina desk-and-bookcase from her during the late 1930s."¹¹⁰

Many years later, after the founding of the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, Frank still called on Pattie Anderson on field research trips he made with Brad Rauschenburg of MESDA. Brad remembers her as one of the more interesting dealers he encountered. "She had a great eye for antiquities," Brad said, "and she could get into any house." He recalled that

Pattie Anderson had a big house by the side of the road, and everything in the house was for sale. She always wanted us to eat there, but we never wanted to because there were rather unclean conditions. She had to keep ladder back chairs in the windows in the kitchen so the chickens wouldn't fly in . . . She had the eye, and she found a lot of things that are in our earliest rooms. She and Frank and Willis Stallings, an antiques dealer from High Point, used to go on trips together, and Frank said that quite often they would pull into a town, and he would go down on one side of the street, and Pattie Anderson or Willis would go down the other. They'd knock on doors and ask if there were any antiques for sale. They'd always come back from a trip loaded with antiques. People were willing to sell then. Sometimes they'd pass up things we'd jump to buy now, but things were so commonplace in those days.¹¹¹

Frank Horton was becoming an authoritative antiquarian by 1940. Nevertheless, he still went off on the occasional wild goose chase, according to his mother. Such calculated risks are necessary in most significant endeavors, however, and Theo entrusted more and more of the business decisions to her younger son.¹¹² She frequently left him in charge while she went on vacation. She and Jack Taliaferro had enjoyed at least one camping trip to Florida in Theo's trailer. Just before her second husband's death, Theo had purchased a new



30. Theo Taliaferro's second travel trailer, c. 1938. *FHC*.

trailer, and in 1940 she traveled to Florida with friends, camping in the trailer there and en route to and from Kinderton.

By now, Frank was not only centrally involved in the family antiques business, he was researching the history of various pieces, and compiling a detailed index of objects bought and sold. Their ever-widening inventory included furniture and decorative art gathered from North and South. Fine old Philadelphia pieces mingled with a seventeenth-century clothes cupboard from tidewater Virginia; an early desk-and-bookcase from eastern North Carolina; a Williamsburg dressing table. Some pieces came and went through the shop; others were held back because of their personal appeal.

Sometimes Frank and his mother over-priced items, especially out of their own growing regard for southern antiques, and the pieces did not sell. Family members later teased that storage rooms were full of "Frank's mistakes" or "Frank's failures," and they welcomed some of those pieces into their own homes.¹¹³ Frank himself has often said ruefully that if he and his mother "had been half-way successful as antique dealers, they may never have founded MESDA."¹¹⁴

Frank's passion for collecting and documenting antiques was

soon to be abruptly overshadowed, however, by the growing national anxiety about the war in Europe. By December 12, 1941, in those fearful days just after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Frank was leading one of the many local civilian observation teams set up throughout the United States. The Kinderton rooftop was the designated observation vantage point, and Frank poured his energy into organizing his neighbors. Theo recorded the enterprise in her diary:

Cold and damp for the observation men on top of the house. Guess they are better off there than lots of observers, having a tent, a stove, light, and a phone right in the tent, and a bed for one to rest, etc. Frank has done all the work, and calling the observers has been a real job. We are having no customers for antiques since December 7. Only two times the bell has tolled. I seem to be in a daze. Can't accomplish much these days.¹¹⁵

On December 13, 1941, Theo wrote, "Frank busy getting new people signed up for observation work and training each new set. We had a long wire from some brigadier general about it today urging a 24-hour vigil and necessity for such. Also a form to be filled out as to just what we are doing and have done."¹¹⁶

Frank quickly put together an efficient rotation of neighbors to keep watch, and he also organized and ran lively poker games for those awaiting their turn in the tent. When Miles and his wife Julia, now residing at Virginia Beach, came to Clarksville to visit, they took turns on the rooftop. Everyone grappled with the sudden changes in normal life as they knew it. On January 14, 1942, Theo scrawled in her diary, "Antiques are no longer in demand."¹¹⁷

She and Pattie Anderson still ventured out in search of antiques, but there seemed to be no luck whether you were buying or selling. The war dominated everything, and Frank was certain he would be called up for active duty. "Uncle Sam Needs You" placards were posted everywhere, and all men between the ages of eighteen and sixty-five were required to register for military service. For the time being, men between the ages of twenty and forty-four might be called to serve. Frank attempted to enlist at least once during the spring of 1942, but was told he would have to report that very day.

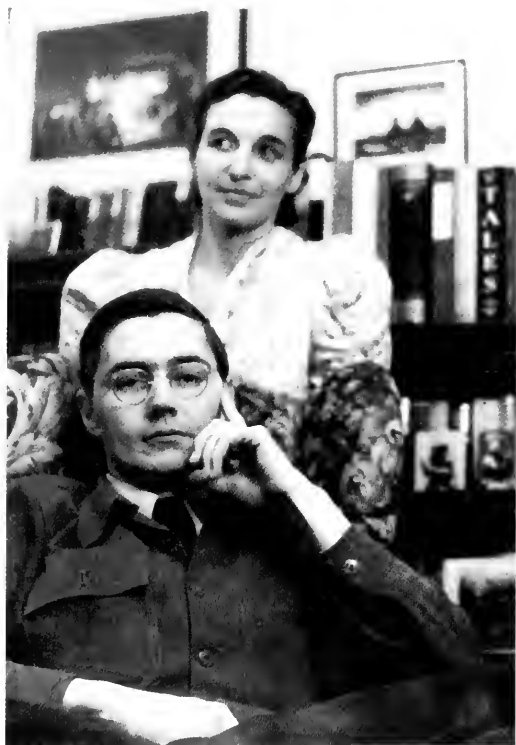
There were arrangements to be made at home, for his mother and their business, however, before he could leave Kinderton.

He officially enlisted in the Navy in July of 1942, and on July 14 he departed for the Naval Training Station at Norfolk, Virginia. Later that day Theo wrote, "Frank and I got up at 7:30 this A.M. and he left on bus for Richmond at 8:57 A.M. I took him to bus station [sic] & left him there. I just couldn't stand to see it roll away."¹¹⁸

At first, Frank went through basic training and then was assigned to work in the Classification Office at the Naval Training Station in Norfolk. There he met Hilding Jaderborg, called "Jitterbug" by friends who had difficulty pronouncing his Swedish surname. Frank and Jitterbug began a friendship that would last a lifetime. "Frank Horton was a very intelligent, well-organized person who handled his assignment with authority," Hilding Jaderborg recalled many years later. "I immediately became aware of Frank's interest in the historical aspects of the entire area. He took me over to see the well-known Adam Thoroughgood home before it had been restored. This is now a famous landmark in the Norfolk area."¹¹⁹ Even then, Jaderborg remembered, he could see that Frank "was totally consumed by antiques."¹²⁰

In the early months of the war, Frank lived in an apartment at Virginia Beach. Because Miles and Julia lived nearby, he saw them frequently, often coming to visit them with a load of laundry in tow. As Miles described it, Frank used to "salaam [sic] in front of the washing machine."¹²¹ Frank also introduced his friend Jitterbug to Theo, Miles, and Julia, and all of them enjoyed his company. "To spend weekends with them was really the beginning of a wonderful relationship with the family," Jaderborg recalled.¹²²

During my first visit I noticed that his brother, Miles, had a large collection of classical music recordings. He played one and asked me if I knew the name of the composition as well as the composer. I immediately told him that it was the Concerto in A Minor for piano and orchestra by Robert Schumann. This led to a lot of fun as Miles loved to play a symphonic work or concerto on his record player and then ask me to identify



31. Frank Horton and his sister-in-law, Julia Heick Horton, early 1940s. *FHC*.

the piece and its composer. In most cases I could give him the correct answer because of my intense interest in classical music. Frank always enjoyed these sessions as well.¹²³

Years after the war, the friends had a reunion. Miles Horton helped to arrange it, writing to Hilding Jaderborg, "Frank suggests that we all meet here at Virginia Beach and have an old time Pow Wow . . . Schumann's A Minor and all."¹²⁴

Miles and Julia lived just a few blocks from the Cavalier Hotel, which boasted a beautiful golf course. Jitterbug had been an active golfer for many years, and Frank had developed an interest in the sport, so the two friends played the Cavalier course as often as they could. In the fall of 1942, Frank began studying for his third class yeoman's rating, and "barring my dumbness," he wrote home to Theo, "I should be a yeoman by January."¹²⁵

On October 10, 1942, Frank and Jitterbug were transferred to duty in the file section of the office of the Provost Marshal on the Norfolk Naval Base.¹²⁶ In the Provost Marshal's office, the two young enlisted men did preliminary work on cases involving Naval personnel who had been accused of misconduct, from going AWOL to breaking Navy regulations on liberty.



32. *USS Sturtevant* (DD-240), c. 1945. *FHC*.

After about eighteen months of this duty, Frank was assigned to sea duty aboard the *USS Sturtevant*, a destroyer escort ship ordered to Atlantic duty. Jitterbug stayed on in the Provost Marshal's office for several months before he, too, was ordered to sea. He was assigned Pacific duty aboard the *USS Walton*, also a destroyer escort.¹²⁷ Their paths did not cross again during the war, but Frank Horton and Hilding Jaderborg corresponded over the years, and always exchanged Christmas cards.

Throughout the war, Miles and Julia remained at Virginia Beach. On May 10, 1944, their daughter Caroline was born in Norfolk. Their subsequent letters to Theo were full of news about the baby, her only grandchild, whom Miles nicknamed "Snicky." Soon after she learned to talk, Caroline began calling her grandmother "Bandy." In Frank's absence, Theo took comfort in having one son and his family nearby. Julia and Miles furnished their house in part with the antiques that Julia had earned or bought from Theo and Frank's shop. Caroline grew up knowing that "there were certain rules about what you did and did not climb on, did and did not bang on."¹²⁸

In later years, Caroline recalled that after she was grown and married, a childhood friend said to her, "You know, when we were kids, I felt real sorry for you because I thought you had such old, shabby furniture in your house. And then I grew up and I found out that you had antiques!"¹²⁹



Frank's letters to his mother during the war are full of personal news, business details relating to the antique business and the farm, and, occasionally, a slightly naughty joke. Wartime censorship restrictions limited what he could say about his work, and, in any case, he al-



33. Theo Taliaferro and Julia Caroline Horton (age 4), 1948. *FHC*.

ways put the best face on matters when he could write to Theo about potentially risky ventures. It was probably just as well that his mother did not know the perilous details of her son's wartime assignment. At intervals, the ten officers and 173 men of the *USS Sturtevant* put out to sea on training missions or maneuvers. As one of five ships operating as Escort Division Three, based in Norfolk, Virginia, the *Sturtevant* crossed the Atlantic thirteen times during the war, providing destroyer escort service to military vessels and patrolling the seas on the lookout for enemy submarines and battle-ships.

The *Sturtevant's* first convoy destination was Casablanca, a "slow and tedious" voyage of about nineteen days. "It was late in the evening," an officer aboard the ship wrote, "when we finally weaved [sic] around sunken craft to moor, almost within the long shadows of the battered French battleship Jean Bart [sic], mute testimony to American naval supremacy." At Gibraltar, they "patrolled the cliff-bound straits, searching for enemy subs." Later, the *Sturtevant* escorted British tanker convoys, "virtual speed demons alongside the Liberty tanks we had nursed down south," the officer wrote. The ship made five voyages between New York City and Londonderry, Ireland, "taking men and materials—mostly gasoline and oil—to the European fighting fronts."¹³⁰

The ship also journeyed to Liverpool "with its towers and huge cranes along the waterfront," and to "coal-smudged Cardiff, Wales, and bombed-out Southampton, England." The *Sturtevant* served as the flagship for one of the last convoys of World War II.¹³¹

In June of 1945, the *Sturtevant* returned to Norfolk Navy Yard for a "general overhaul and reconditioning." Her anti-aircraft firepower was intensified, and the ship was "groomed" for hazardous duty in Pacific and the expected Japanese conflict. One of the ship's officers wrote, "Guantanamo, Cuba, was the last stop east of Panama after 34 days in the yard preparing for kamikazes. There we indulged in 15 days of gunnery drills, pouring metal into surface and air targets and bombarding Culebra Island. With our ears ringing, we tra-

versed the Panama Canal on August 7, arriving in San Diego, Calif. [sic], the day following Japan's military breakup. But, we still had our orders, and off to Pearl Harbor we went."¹³² At Pearl Harbor, thirty percent of the ship's crew was reassigned to make space for 144 Navy men bound for San Pedro, California. Then the ship navigated the Panama Canal on September 21, bound for Charleston, South Carolina.

During those years, whenever there was shore leave, Frank took advantage of it. He wrote to his mother on April 13, 1944 from an unidentified location:

Thank you for the recent letters. You have no idea what they mean to me to know the little things you do. I have been getting more than my share of golf in the last week. We have had wonderful golf weather . . . I find I have improved a little from day to day, but see a long road ahead . . . The picture of the clock came. It is a fine clock and rather rare, but I do not have the slightest idea what it's value is. It could be \$1,500, or it could be \$300, and I would not know if it were reasonable or not. I am going to return the picture to the man, since I do not have a notion as to its worth . . . I love you, Frank!¹³³

In May of 1944, when the *Sturtevant* put out from Norfolk bound for New York City on "what is known as a little training cruise," Frank wrote to Theo that he had been assigned new duties aboard ship. He was working hard:

I don't know just which end is up. I've been shifted from the ship's office to the log room (this is under the engineers) and I now have the job of keeping track of all records, reports, files, etc. of the engineer department on board. I am more than bewildered by it all since I know nothing of motors and their parts. Oh, well, I suppose it can be conquered so I'll try. It seems I have one hell of a mess to straighten out, just as I had at the Naval Training Station . . . I finally got a bunk in a small room with one other fellow. It is quite nice and most unusual for my position aboard so I am afraid it won't last . . . All the love in the world. Sweetheart. Frank

Then he added a postscript: "I didn't get seasick—but then, we didn't have any weather."¹³⁴



KINDERTON

*We invite you to inspect our stock
of fine American period furniture.
Inquiries welcomed.*

**MRS. J. B. TALIAFERRO
and FRANK HORTON**

Clarksville, Virginia

34. Kinderton advertisement that appeared in the May 1944 issue of *The Magazine ANTIQUES*.

Throughout the war, no matter what his duties or his destination, Frank's ongoing interest in antiques served as ballast, and he and his mother sustained a running dialogue about their business. They saw each other as often as wartime travel permitted. In May of 1944 when Frank had liberty in New York City, Theo met him there. Afterward, Frank wrote home about their visit and their kinship:

Dearest Mother, I purchased a copy of *Antiques* last night, and was glad to see that our ad got a good place on the back cover . . . You will never know how much I appreciated your visit to NYC. I really enjoy going places with you as you and I think so much alike. I will mention one exception, however, and that is your tendency to rush too much. Please try to cut down on some of your work there so you will have more time to take your time, if you know what I mean.¹³⁵

On July 26, 1944, Frank wrote to thank his mother for selling a sideboard and a corner cupboard. "I am most happy, as you can realize, to have finally gotten 'shut' of them," he said. "I hope that they stick." Then he sent some cautionary advice: "Please watch your purchases from Mrs. _____. She's honest but can and often buys things that are not right." Theo had written to tell Frank about her problems with one dealer who had failed to fulfill his end of a bargain. She should wait until he could come home, Frank admonished, and then he would "straighten out the affair." His letter, written from New York, continued poignantly:

Sorry to hear that the lowboy turned out to be bad . . . Sounds like you found plenty to buy without the lowboy, however. Wish I could be there to see them. You have no idea how I miss the business. I go around up here and window shop but find that I cannot satisfy my longing to be home with you, the business, etc., by going around looking at other people's business. All my love, Sweetheart. Frank¹³⁶



In 1945, Frank Horton, now twenty-seven, had been on active duty with the Navy for nearly two years. He had spent New Year's Eve of 1944 aboard the *Sturtevant*, bound from Casablanca and Gibraltar to New York. New Year's Eve of 1945 was celebrated in Cardiff, Wales, where "the entire waterfront was a bedlam of noise from ships' bells and whistles as the New Year came in," and many of the crew were "groggy on Welsh grog and stout."¹³⁷ Like every other American, Frank Horton was ready for the war to be over.

35. Cup and saucer given to Frank Horton by his hosts in Wales, 1944. Marked "Swansea." *Courtesy Jim and Harriet Pratt.*



Blackouts now intensified as the East Coast of the United States stood on alert because of the reported possibility of attacks by robot bombs. Hopes of an end to this seemingly endless war would rise and fall again and again. To fear, hardship, apprehension, and sacrifice was added a deep layer of national grief when, on April 12, 1945, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt died of a cerebral hemorrhage.

Later that April, with Germany's unconditional surrender, victory was declared in Europe. Back in the United States, in the remote desert of New Mexico, not far from where Frank and Miles Horton had marched as cadets at the New Mexico Military Institute, the first atom bomb was tested. Its devastating power was proven on the world stage on August 6, 1945 with the bombing of Hiroshima. A second atomic bomb all but obliterated Nagasaki on August 9. The war was over at last.

In August, gas fuel rationing came to an end in the United States. By November, Americans who had been doing without for four years found most supplies but sugar readily available. The lights came back on as the national "dimout" was canceled, and there were no more midnight curfews.

Yeoman Frank Horton was on convoy duty in the Atlantic in

June of 1945. For the first time in years, the *USS Sturtevant* could cross the Atlantic with lights shining at night. Frank's ship was bound for Cardiff, Wales, and after an uneventful crossing the crew welcomed shore liberty. Frank spent his free time in Cardiff his favorite pursuit, antiquing—"bargaining around for a cup and saucer, which I got." He also visited some people he had met in an antiques gallery. They invited him to tea in their Cardiff home, which, Frank wrote, had withstood three separate bombings. His hosts gave him a cup and saucer to remember them by.¹³⁸

By August 10, 1945, the day after the bombing of Nagasaki, Japan, the *Sturtevant* sat anchored off San Pedro, California, with Los Angeles in the distance. Aboard ship, Yeoman Frank Horton described his feelings in a letter to his mother:

I don't suppose that I shall ever get up again before reveille just to hear the news, but that's what I did this morning. At 6:00 someone came down and said something about Japan offering to quit that mess on condition that the emperor be allowed to remain in office. I was out of [my] bunk in nothing flat and up to the radio shack to get the straight dope. At this time, 7:30, the news is still the same, so I have high hopes of not being disillusioned.¹³⁹

Frank shared the news he could: "We transferred a lot of men at Pearl Harbor and took on 105 passengers bound for the good old USA and discharge." The men often slept outside, on deck, en route to the United States. They would sail through the Panama Canal and then rejoin the Atlantic fleet. Frank believed that they would reach the East Coast by late September, and he hoped to be discharged soon after that.¹⁴⁰

He and his fellow crewmen celebrated during their shore liberty. Frank sent Theo a photograph of "several of the fellows and me gathered around the piano in some bar" in a Mexican tourist town. "I had high hopes," Frank wrote, of getting a "big fat juicy steak, but found they had meatless days there, too."

We decided to take the town in so we headed for the worst section we could find! It was bad enough, but not so bad as I had expected. The



36. Frank Horton (standing far left) and shipmates on shore leave in Mexico, 1945. *FHC*.

prostitutes had their little rooms facing on the streets. They stand in the doorways to solicit business. I kept a good distance from it all, but still felt contaminated on returning to the ship! After seeing this part of the town, we landed in the bar where the picture was made and we stayed there until time to return to the ship. That's the news that I can speak of. All my love, Frank¹⁴¹

As the ship reached Panama, Frank was preoccupied with his efforts to obtain a discharge. He was increasingly disgruntled because married men were being given priority points over single men on the discharge list. He wrote to Theo about it August 22:

The war's sudden end came as a complete surprise to me. My first thought, of course, is to get out. I immediately submitted an application for discharge, with affidavits attached . . . It does seem that if a person has not married because he feels it unwise for any reason (has not found the right girl with me), he should not be considered not eligible for discharge.¹⁴²

He worried from afar about his mother's well being. "Now, Mother," he cautioned, "you must not try to open the business up again until I can get home. I know that the temptation will be great with gasoline rationing gone, and the road teeming with buyers again, but you must stick by your resolution . . . Please heed the doctor's instruction and take care of the dearest thing on earth to me. All my love, Frank."¹⁴³

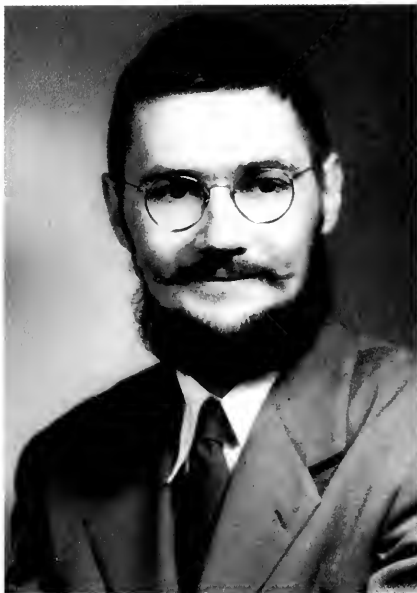
Theo was indeed making plans, including an effort to sell Kinderton. She had lived for the past three years in an anxious, stressful limbo. She was impatient, and ready to pick up the reins of her life. Frank understood, but urged patience.

"Please take care of yourself, Mother," he wrote. "There will be a sailor coming home soon, I hope. All my love, Frank."¹⁴⁴

III

Frank Horton was discharged from the Navy on October 6, 1945, and traveled home to Kinderton. During the war years, he had thought at length about what he wanted to do with his life. He told his mother that he was "very well satisfied" with the antique business "as a life work." He was aware of the difficulties of it, he had written to Theo early in 1945. Nonetheless, this is what he wanted to do. "I am not the type to work myself to death at some cut and dried business that I get no pleasure from, just to make a living and try to mass together a fortune that I don't believe can be made anymore." Frank wrote:

Mother, I am afraid—afraid of myself. I know that I am not the kind to stick to something that I am not interested in and cannot find pleasure in doing. I also know my weakness in doing everything that I do to a point of exaggeration. I do not believe that I am capable of ever making a living in any business such as insurance, real estate, etc. Throw my capabilities aside, and I still do not think that I have the interest to go into something like that wholeheartedly enough to make a go of it. I cannot stand competition. If I have to get out and take the bread from one man's mouth in order to have it for myself, I'm afraid that he will be the one to



37. Frank Horton (and furry friend), c. 1946. *FHC*.

have the bread. In the antique business, you meet none of this. You are on your own with little competition.¹⁴⁵

By 1947, Frank and Theo had returned to Winston-Salem to live at 512 West Fifth Street, in the house at the corner of Fifth and Poplar Streets, currently the site of the Integon Building. Frank opened an antique shop there, but it did not flourish, in part, it has been said, because he was scrupulously honest about what he did and did not know about the objects he offered for sale.¹⁴⁶

His advertisement promoted "PERIOD FURNITURE, PRINTS, DECORATIVE ACCESSORIES." In smaller print, he offered "One of the largest stocks of authentic antiques in the south."¹⁴⁷ To insure

this authenticity, Frank pored over old newspapers, letters, manuscripts, books, any documents he could lay his hands on.

Many of the pieces Frank and Theo bought went straight into their shop, but others were kept for their private collections. One of the most striking examples is the handsome eastern Virginia court cupboard, considered “the earliest existing piece of Southern furniture, dating around 1645.”¹³⁸ Crafted of white oak and walnut, with yellow pine panels, surfaces, and interiors, this piece came into Frank Horton’s hands in 1947 through a convoluted set of circumstances.¹⁴⁰ J. L. Brockwell, a Virginia dealer, had discovered the piece on the back porch of the B. B. Smith residence near South Hill, Vir-



38. Court Cupboard,
southeastern Virginia,
1650–70, oak and yellow
pine. HOA: 49-7/8";
WOA: 50"; DOA:
18-7/8". MESDA Acc.
2024.6.

ginia. Mr. Smith, who used the sturdy cupboard for storage for his tools and smoked hams, had inherited the rare piece from his grandmother. The court cupboard had been in the Smith family since it was made by a Virginia furniture maker about 1645.

Brockwell offered Smith a hundred dollars for the piece, but, suspicions raised, Smith refused. Aside from its history in his family, and its usefulness to him, that sounded like a lot of money for an old cupboard, and he decided he would bide his time. Brockwell returned on several occasions trying to buy the piece, to no avail. About a year later, Brockwell arrived at the Smith house with a thousand dollars in ten-dollar bills. One at a time, he counted them out and stacked them on Mr. Smith's bed. This time, Smith accepted the offer. If Brockwell had offered a single ten dollar bill a year earlier, Smith chided, he would have sold the piece on the spot.

When Brockwell and his wife showed the piece in a New York antiques show in 1929, someone offered them twenty thousand dollars for the court cupboard, but they declined, believing they could command a better price for the rare piece.¹⁵⁰ Some years later, in the Brockwells' shop, Frank first saw the handsome cupboard, and knew he had to have it. Unfortunately, the Brockwells' marriage ended in divorce, but not before Mrs. Brockwell had hidden the court cupboard in Petersburg, Virginia.

The cupboard stayed sequestered for fifteen years, but Frank Horton was determined to find it and buy it. He persuaded Mrs. Brockwell's neighbor to intercede, and one day the two ladies visited Theo and Frank's shop to discuss the possible sale of the cupboard. Frank offered \$2,500, which Mrs. Brockwell refused. Frank counter-offered: How about if he gave them that price, plus ten percent of every sale he made in the shop that day? The ladies agreed.

Unfortunately for the ladies—but fortunately for Frank—sales were slow that momentous day. His only sale was a stem of pressed glass. It cost one dollar. Frank sealed the deal on the court cupboard for \$2,500.10. His only regret, he later told a friend, was that he was reluctant for people to know that he ever handled pressed glass.¹⁵¹

The wayward court cupboard found its ultimate home with

Frank Horton, who loved it from the time he laid eyes on it. “Just think of the conditions in which people were living when it was made,” he said. “They were really just trying to survive, and yet here is this thing with perfect proportions. It is exactly as tall as it is wide. It almost brings tears to the eyes to think of the wonderful thing accomplished there.”¹⁵² The court cupboard, which resided for years in Frank and Theo’s home, can be seen today in the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts.

One interest led inevitably to another, as Frank’s curiosity about furniture stimulated an avid interest in historical architecture. In 1948, he paid his first visit to the Archives of the Moravian Church in North America, Southern Province, a treasure store of primary sources and secondary sources presided over in Salem by the distinguished Moravian Archivist, Dr. Adelaide L. Fries. This gold mine was located only seven city blocks from Frank’s house, yet he had never been there before, and the visit changed his life.

Frank was thirty years old in 1948. Tall, lanky, bespectacled and quiet, he already looked like the scholar that he was becoming. His quest at the Moravian archives that first day was to search for some information about an old house that intrigued him. Dr. Fries gave him the necessary orientation to the proper use of the innumerable Moravian records and resources, and he was quickly absorbed in all there was to learn about Salem.

Heretofore, Frank Horton had been fascinated with antique furniture in and of itself. Now, as he immersed himself day by day in the copious records, files, and documents in the Moravian archives, he broadened the range of his interest from the artifacts themselves to the architecture, the artisans, and the history that encompassed the objects and gave them meaning.

He decided to explore every possible facet of Salem’s architectural history, and plunged into the records the Moravians had kept in prolific detail since the founding of the Wachovia Settlement in 1753. He and Dr. Fries were becoming friends and allies in the pursuit of Salem history. According to James A. Gray, Jr., who had met Frank when he was “prowling around” in Frank’s antique shop, Dr.

Adelaide Fries “practically adopted” Frank. She would help him through “the maze of all that historical information.”¹⁵³

Soon, with her blessing, Frank began juxtaposing the written records to the meticulously detailed maps drawn by Moravian surveyors. A logical extension of this new passion was the search for old drawings and photographs to show the town and its dwellings at various times. Frank is a skillful and imaginative detective, and this trait is a key to effective scholarship. An incidental reference in the 1799 Moravian records caught his attentive eye, and yielded an important clue to the architectural history of Salem. In preparation for the tax assessor’s visit to Salem in 1799, Frank read, residents of the community were asked to list their dwellings and workshops, and to include the exact dimensions of the structures they inhabited.

Frank knew the Moravians well enough by now to anticipate that they no doubt prepared for the tax assessor a map identifying residents, the structures they occupied, and the pertinent architectural details and dimensions. He also knew that in their methodical, Germanic way, they would surely have kept a duplicate of this record on file. He was right, as he and Dr. Fries confirmed when they probed the archives. Frank’s hunch led to the discovery of an invaluable map, replete with documentation that would be vital in coming years.¹⁵⁴



Frank Horton did not attend a momentous event in Williamsburg, Virginia in January of 1949, but he heard about it, and what he heard changed his life and helped launch a new movement. The First Williamsburg Antiques and Decorations Forum was sponsored jointly by The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and *The Magazine ANTIQUES*. One session convened January 24–28, and the second took place January 31–February 4, 1949. Experts in American decorative arts and historical research were invited to give lectures. Speakers included Hensleigh Wedgwood, president of Wedgwood of America, Inc.; Charles F. Montgomery, specialist in Americana;

Charles Messer Stow, antiques editor of the *New York Sun*; various officials from Colonial Williamsburg; Joseph Downs, curator of the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art; and others.

Downs spoke at a discussion-tea on Tuesday, January 25. In the audience that day was a friend of Frank Horton and his mother—Mrs. Dallas Coons of Richmond, Virginia.¹⁵⁵ It was Mrs. Coons who told Frank and Theo about what transpired when Joseph Downs spoke. As Frank recalled it,

The first Antiques Forum in 1949 in Williamsburg was about the general subject, as most first forums are, of American antiques. At that Forum it was mostly about New England and the mid-Atlantic States because that was what most people collected and knew about. Mr. Joseph Downs was in the process of leaving the American Wing of the Metropolitan in New York and going to Winterthur as Director . . . He made a general speech on the condition of antiquities in this country. He made the remark, "Little of artistic merit was made south of Baltimore." Well, making that remark in Virginia was bound to make a ruckus. A "little lady" in the audience asked if he made the remark from "ignorance" or "prejudice." Of course, he pled "ignorance."¹⁵⁶

Joseph Downs's remarks set off a chain reaction of response. Soon after the first Williamsburg Forum adjourned, plans were underway to turn the spotlight on southern furniture at the next forum, planned for 1952, with a concurrent exhibition of southern-made furniture to be presented at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. Helen Comstock, the Gallery Editor of *The Magazine ANTIQUES*, would coordinate the exhibit.¹⁵⁷ She believed, she wrote, that "Southern furniture really ought to be brought together for study," and predicted correctly that the exhibition would be "a really historic event."¹⁵⁸ State representatives from Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia were chosen to identify objects worthy of inclusion in the 1952 Southern Furniture Show. Lucy Cherry Crisp, Director of the North Carolina State Arts Society, was named chairperson for North Carolina.¹⁵⁹ One of her associates in the field

FRANK HORTON - ANTIQUES

512 WEST FIFTH STREET
WINSTON-SALEM, N. C. .

THIS PIECE GUARANTEED TO
BE A GENUINE ANTIQUE.

CIRCA 1760-1760
SOLD 13 FEBRUARY, 78

39. Frank Horton's sales label from his
antique business, 1948. *FHC*.

would be Frank Horton, whose antique shop and personal collection already contained important southern pieces. Frank embarked on a methodical search for North Carolina objects that would disprove Joseph Downs' contention. He would take Helen Comstock around the state to see North Carolina antiques with her own eyes, and to photograph them to share with her central committee.

He got the opportunity to work with her, Frank said, because "I happened to exist. I was a very small dealer at the time in the sense of stock. I was the only one in the Winston-Salem area, where there were a number of collectors who had interesting things and I knew what they were, of course. So I just kind of fell into it in that way. I was a very small potato in the whole makeup of that time."¹⁰⁰

At the 1949 Forum, many seeds had been planted that would propagate in formal and intensive studies, surveys, and research about southern decorative arts and the artisans who produced them. Other ideas germinated and were born: As Frank Horton worked on the exhibit that would open in 1952, he began to dream about a museum devoted to early southern decorative arts.

He was thirty-one, and still a bachelor. His brother Miles had married and divorced, and would soon be married again. Frank had occasionally appeared to be interested in girls over the years since that boyhood day when his elementary school girlfriend's parents ran over him with the car. But he was reserved, shy, and introverted, and focused on his interests. There were no romances of record, and

some people speculated that Theo probably would have thwarted anything resembling a potentially serious relationship.¹⁶¹

Friends and relatives often teased Frank Horton about whether he would ever marry. "To this day," his brother Miles wrote, "Frank is putting furniture in the first place in his heart, and has yet to have a 'date' with a girl—saying that the only 'dates' of interest are those on pieces of furniture. If you ask him about the subject, he'll say that he is waiting for a girl with:

- (a) Ball-and-claw feet;
- (b) Serpentine front;
- (c) All the original brass pulls."¹⁶²

Theo Horton Taliaferro put it in slightly different words one day when a friend asked her if she thought Frank would ever marry. She answered, "Only if he finds someone with cabriole legs and claw-and-ball feet."¹⁶³ Eventually, it would be said, Frank Horton was completely and happily married to his work.



Forsyth County, North Carolina celebrated its centennial in 1949, a propitious year for young men who possessed a passion for history and wanted to share it with their fellow citizens. One such energetic and farsighted young man was appointed chairman of the centennial celebration. He was James A. Gray, Jr., known to his friends as Jim. He was born in Salem to parents who were civic leaders representing two major forces in the history of the area. His mother, Pauline Bahnson Gray, was a Moravian who wanted Salem history and architecture to be preserved. His father had been president and then chairman of the board of R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company. His cousin Bowman Gray would later serve as president of R. J. Reynolds. Jim Gray, who worked at the Piedmont Publishing Company, was soon actively involved in far-reaching local efforts to preserve Old Salem.

It was time. The once proud and pristine village was now pocked



40. Intersection of Main and Academy Streets, Winston-Salem, (looking north), 1940s. *Old Salem Photo Collection; hereafter OSPC.*

with run-down buildings. The heart of historic Salem was dissected by the U.S. Route 52 and North Carolina Route 8 traffic running on Main Street. Cars, trucks, and trolleys so crowded the historic roadways that by 1952 it would be estimated that 15,000 cars used Main and Liberty Streets in Salem every day. That number would jump to 22,000 cars a day by the mid-50s. Some of the businesses lining this busy thoroughfare were thriving—such as Krispy Kreme's first doughnut shop. But other, less desirable businesses had settled into the center of historic Salem. Alsbaugh's Flats, a row of duplexes at the foot of Bank Street, housed prostitutes, according to some sources, and Frank Horton apparently told others that one building on Main Street "was being used as a brothel."¹⁶⁴ Despite the stable

presence of Home Moravian Church and Salem College, and of several well-kept homes, the surrounding historic structures were in danger of being swallowed by time, traffic, and decay.

According to R. Arthur Spough, Jr., who would later serve as President of Old Salem, Inc., "The spark that ignited the Old Salem restoration effort occurred in July of 1947 when a grocer announced plans to build a supermarket in the heart of Old Salem. The en-



41. Frank Horton (far right) and the architects of Old Salem, c. 1953. *OSPC*.

croachment of commercial enterprises into the Salem community and the deterioration of original buildings were threatening the existence of the birthplace of Winston-Salem." In response to the concern of "aroused citizens," a Citizens Committee for the Preservation of Old Salem was convened, and, on December 21, 1948, their study and recommendations resulted in "the first zoning ordinance in North Carolina establishing a historic district."¹⁶⁵

Meanwhile, Frank Horton was still digging deep into the Moravian Archives. The tax assessor's map he had turned up took on an immediate practical value when, on October 18, 1949, in the midst of the zoning conflict in Salem, the city brought in a consultant from Boston, Massachusetts to inspect the historic district. On the recommendation of Dr. Adelaide Fries, Frank and the map were assigned to accompany the consultant, Andrew Hepburn, Jr., of Perry, Shaw and Hepburn.¹⁶⁶ "Frank rode with our architect, Andrew Hepburn, making a secret windshield survey of each building in Old Salem," Jim Gray remembered, "classifying them as priority 1, 2, or 3 in the upcoming restoration. Frank chuckled later that Hepburn was a marine architect. Now we know whose expertise came up with priorities 1, 2, and 3."¹⁶⁷

On November 15, 1949, Frank attended a luncheon at the old Hotel Robert E. Lee to hear Hepburn make his report and recommend that Old Salem be restored. Thanks to Frank and his map, Hepburn could also recommend what needed to be done for each house in Old Salem. Anticipating an uproar over his ambitious vision, Hepburn wrote,

It is to be remembered that the recommendations suggested here cover a long period of time, and if the proposals seems somewhat ruthless in the frequency with which the words "destroyed," "demolished," "disposed of" and the like appear, it must be remembered that the proposer is working with one aim in mind and that is an eventual unanimity of appearance of the old town of Salem, one which will appeal to the historian, the architect, the casual visitor, and above all the people of Salem who, like everyone else, will travel miles to examine the towns of others, and through over-familiarity disregard the wonders of their own.¹⁶⁸

While the magnitude of the report was sinking in, the city fathers were planning their strategy. On December 17, 1949, Winston-Salem mayor Marshall C. Kurfess announced Jim Gray's appointment as chairman of the Old Salem Restoration Committee. One of his first official acts was to chair an investigating committee to study zoning and other guidelines for any building and architectural changes in Old Salem. Joining Jim Gray on the committee were Charles H. Babcock, vice chairman, and Frank L. Horton, secretary. Their first meeting took place January 10, 1950.¹⁶⁹

Before they were done two months later, the investigating committee had completed an inventory of the historic buildings still standing in Old Salem; gathered information about old buildings that might be reconstructed; examined restorations underway in other communities; evaluated the support they might expect from the local community; worked on a projected budget and the ways and means of securing needed funds; and projected the revenue potential of a successful restoration.¹⁷⁰ They had also, on the occasion of their first meeting in January, obtained an option to buy an Old Salem house in the 500 block of South Main Street. The house had been the source of controversy because its owner, R. J. Rizik, wanted to add a decidedly anachronistic front porch and other modifications, and open a rug shop.¹⁷¹ The option agreement was written on a scrap of ladies' flowered notepaper, bedecked with yellow roses, and while the committee had no implicit authority to purchase property, they seized the moment and then found the way. All they had to do was to raise \$16,500, which, with the approval of the eighteen-member Investigating Committee, Jim Gray proceeded to do with the help of Wachovia Bank and his personal collateral in R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company stock.¹⁷²

Frank Horton's painstaking research had been crucial in the preparation of the report, and in the subsequent vision of what Old Salem could become. The mayor was so impressed with the report of the investigating committee that he wanted to unveil it at a public meeting, scheduled for March 16, 1950 at the Hotel Robert E.



42. Theo and Frank's house at 1701 Reynolda Road, c. 1949. *FHC*.

Lee. As a Moravian band played, nearly 350 people packed the hotel ballroom that evening. A cross section of the community heard the public reading of the committee's detailed recommendations, including Jim Gray's announcement that Norman P. Stone, owner of the John Henry Boner house in Old Salem, had offered it for restoration as a memorial to his deceased wife.

To his bitter disappointment, however, Frank Horton had to miss the festivities. He had been bedridden for days with influenza and then pneumonia. He simply was not well enough that snowy night to make it to the hotel.

His mother's diary recorded his preoccupation with Old Salem during those pivotal months in 1950, as well as his regret about missing the town meeting. Theo was not at all well herself, spending much of each day in bed. She was recovering from bronchial pneumonia and experiencing chronic problems with her heart. "Fibrillating still. Felt badly today," she wrote on Thursday, February 23. "At times today I felt I would not be able to breathe. Frank's entire afternoon taken up with James A. Gray, Jr. Here to talk about Salem . . . James Gray is back tonight on Salem business. He and Frank worked until after 11:00."¹³

Jim Gray remembered Theo Horton as a "quiet, retiring sort of



43. Frank Horton (seated in stocks to the right), J. Ernest Yarbrough (seated in stocks to the left), and M.W. Swaim (standing behind stocks) hard at work researching Colonial Williamsburg's restoration efforts in May 1950. Mrs. David Holmes, a Williamsburg guide, observes the scholars at work. *Courtesy of Forsyth County Public Library Photograph Collection.*

person," an expert on antiques who preferred to stay in the background.¹⁷⁴ Theo and Frank now lived in a spacious house at 1701 Reynolda Road, about two and a half miles from the Fifth Street House, and three miles from Old Salem. Miles, too, was living at home. He was now divorced from Julia, who still lived in Virginia with their daughter Caroline. While Miles spent his days helping with the 1950 U.S. Census, Frank immersed himself in the meetings about the proposed restoration of Old Salem. Nevertheless, he faithfully saw to it that Theo took her medicine at proper intervals throughout each day.

But the rest of the time, according to her diary, he was absorbed in Salem business. "James Gray, Jr. and Frank are holding forth in Frank's office again tonight," Theo had noted on January 5.¹⁷⁵ Theo recorded numerous committee meetings and private sessions with Jim Gray. In February, Frank traveled to Colonial Williamsburg

with Jim Gray and Dr. Dale H. Gramley, president of Salem Academy and College, to seek advice about restoration matters.

Despite her own illness, Theo was caught up in the fervor. On March 5, she insisted that Frank and Miles take her on a drive through Salem. "I wanted to refresh my memory about certain houses Frank has been talking about lately," she wrote that night.¹⁷⁶ One Old Salem house he was talking about was the Lewis Eberhardt House, which Frank, with Theo's support, decided to restore on his own.

On March 6, Frank became so ill with a high fever that Theo called the doctor to come, and hired a nurse to care for her son. An elevator had been installed in the house, but even so, she was not well enough to look after Frank by herself. By March 9, he had developed pneumonia. Even with the nurse on duty, Theo fretted about her son as if he were a boy. After she looked in on Frank March 9, she wrote, "I believe he was beginning to think I didn't want to see him. If he could only know how I long to be able to wait on him as I did when he was a little fellow."¹⁷⁷

He was better March 10, and Theo sat with him and read him a detective story. In her diary she mentioned the "Big meeting Thursday night—restoration of Salem."¹⁷⁸

Hoping to be strong enough to attend that big meeting, Frank got dressed on March 15 for the first time since the illness began, and tried to walk outside for a few minutes. But he did not have the stamina to go out. "Jamey Gray and Mr. Hepburn from Boston, the speaker tonight at the Robert E. Lee [at the] rally [for] Old Salem," Theo reported in the ever-present diary. "Great disappointment to Frank that he can't go tonight."¹⁷⁹

He and Jim Gray found themselves in the center of a movement that was both visionary and pragmatic. They were two young men in the right place at the right time. By May of 1950, Old Salem, Inc. had a formal identity, complete with bylaws and trustees, and Jim Gray was elected the first president. With Dr. Douglas L. Rights, President of the Wachovia Historical Society, Frank was assigned the task of overseeing the ongoing translation of Moravian records from

German into English. In essence, he was helping to fill the void left by Adelaide Fries, who died in 1949.

By the end of the first year of its existence, Old Salem, Inc. owned four buildings (the John Henry Boner or Lick-Boner House; historic houses that had most recently been owned by the Rizik and Scrimger families; and the Christoph Vogler house) and had raised more than \$45,000. Twenty-three Winston-Salem citizens, including several Old Salem trustees, had made a three-day study trip to Colonial Williamsburg. Several restorations were already underway in Old Salem. A study had been commissioned to evaluate traffic and traffic flow in Salem and the surrounding area. The goal was to restore the entire village of Old Salem, and, in the process, to preserve a unique heritage. "In Salem we have more to preserve and less to reconstruct than almost any other restoration in the United States," Jim Gray had told the audience at the Hotel Robert E. Lee that snowy March night in 1950.¹⁸⁰

The Old Salem Board not only wanted to do good, it wanted to do no harm. In the 1949 report, Andrew Hepburn had cautioned against simply copying the Old Salem style to make later buildings appear to be older than they actually were. Any new buildings would be required to "be built of good material and be of good design and of sufficiently different style so that they too can never be mistaken for the older Moravian buildings."¹⁸¹

This principle was already part of Frank Horton's philosophy. "There will be no window dressing," he said in 1952. "We plan to restore the old town as it was and not as we imagine it should be."¹⁸² Whatever was done in the name of history must be honest, authentic, and accurate. That was the way he had always collected antiques. That was the way he had sold or failed to sell objects in his shop. That was the way he did his research on the furniture he bought, and in the prolific records in the Moravian archives. And that was certainly the way he would work with others to do all that lay ahead in the preservation of Old Salem.

44. Frank Horton among the original timbers of the Levering House, Old Salem, 1971. *OSPC*.



IV

"Without Frank Horton, there would be no Old Salem," says Flora Ann Bynum, Chairman of the Landscape Restoration Committee of Old Salem. "I keep reminding Frank that Old Salem was his first love . . . He was the authority on Old Salem for so long, and probably still knows more about it than anyone. Frank has a card catalogue mind."¹⁸³

That "card catalogue mind" was one important reason that Frank Horton was chosen to be Director of Restoration for Old Salem in 1950.¹⁸⁴ He would hold this crucial post for twenty years. From the very beginning, he declined a salary. This was work he loved, in a job he had, in a sense, been preparing for all his life. During the next two decades of unrelenting hard work, Frank would oversee the restoration of more than forty buildings and the removal of over one hundred non-conforming structures in Old Salem.¹⁸⁵

Despite her mounting health problems, Theo avidly followed every step of the restoration. They gave up the business of selling antiques, although they never stopped collecting. Now Frank poured his experience as collector and researcher into furnishing the buildings at Old Salem. Frank and Theo could frequently be seen cruising up and down the streets of Old Salem in Frank's car, going from one reconstruction or restoration site to another.

Frank "often served as restoration architect, project manager, and foreman," his colleague Luke Beckerdite observed. On one day he could be seen "inspecting the corner joints of the [Lick-Boner] House, which was the first building restored by Old Salem." On another day, he would climb a ladder to investigate "alterations made to the dormers of the Christoph Vogler House. Frank's unsurpassed knowledge of Moravian architecture and his hands-on approach were critical to the success of all of these projects."¹⁸⁶

In his methodical, meticulous way, Frank researched and recorded every facet of the restoration. As Luke Beckerdite noted, "To facilitate the restoration and interpretation of Old Salem, Frank researched the history of each property and developed incredibly detailed profiles of virtually every person who lived in the community or who was mentioned in the Moravian records. These files, which contain thousands of note cards filled with information transcribed from church documents, public records, and private papers, were the inspiration for MESDA's documentary research files."¹⁸⁷ Sitting for hour after hour at his typewriter, keystroke by patient keystroke, Frank documented the myriad details of Salem's history. Working singlehandedly at first, he compiled an exhaustive yet accessible record of people, structures, and events.

Frank's job was also a collector's dream, for now he got to seek out and purchase furnishings and other objects to outfit the restored houses in Old Salem. The search for Moravian artifacts was detective work on a grand scale. Frank and his colleagues kept a constant vigil for pottery pieces by Gottfried Aust or Rudolph Crist; furniture crafted by Johannes Krause and other Salem joiners; textiles woven or stitched by Moravian sisters; and paintings by Moravian

45. Frank Horton taking a break from typing in his Single Brothers' House office, Old Salem, 1966. *OSPC*.



artists. They were also on the lookout for historical photographs of Salem buildings. Forays into the countryside helped to turn up old glass and wood and other materials useful in certain restoration projects.

The Old Salem mission in those first years was clear: Search. Acquire. Discard the irrelevant. Preserve the pertinent. They were, as Ralph P. Hanes put it, living with “one foot in the past and one foot in the future.” He described his “apprehension” on viewing the early stages of restoration of the Christoph Vogler House: “. . . its rear additions had been partially removed, the interior gutted of much of its flooring, its modern stair and its north chimney removed—looking much as a bombed out building with a battleground of archaeological diggings in the back yard.”¹⁸⁸

Frank was orchestrating the painstaking details with his card catalogue mind. In the first ten years, ten major structures were restored—the Eberhardt House, owned and restored by Frank Horton (completed in 1951); the Lick-Boner House, the first to be acquired by Old Salem, Inc. (completed in 1952); the Boys' School and the

Anna Catharina House (completed in 1954); the John Vogler House, the T. Bagge Community Store, and the Christoph Vogler House (completed in 1955, along with the Salem Square Restoration); the Salem Tavern (completed in 1956); the Hagen House (restored by Barbara Babcock in 1957); and the Miksch Tobacco Shop (completed in 1960).

In 1952, Old Salem, Inc. had joined in a fruitful collaboration with the Wachovia Historical Society, which had been founded in 1895 to illuminate the early history of the Moravian Church in America and to preserve “before it is too late, many a precious relic connected with the history and customs of our forefathers.”¹⁸⁹ Jim Gray as President of Old Salem, Inc., and Frank Horton as Secretary initiated discussions with the Wachovia Historical Society that led to a formal agreement whereby the Society leased the Salem Tavern and the Boys’ School to Old Salem, Inc., as well as the vast collection of “relics” belonging to the Society. Frank Horton was recognized by the Society for his work in “bringing about that happy agreement” between the two organizations.¹⁹⁰ As Frank described it, “Our opportunities, considering that 10 [sic] years ago we did not possess a single item of antiquity, were handed to us on a silver platter with the leasing of the collections of the Wachovia Historical Society. By this one unusual stroke we were handed the responsibility for the care of some 2,800 articles.”¹⁹¹

But the “easy sledding days” were about over, Frank warned. “With each new exhibit opened I say to myself, ‘We are at the bottom of the barrel, I’m sure there are no antiquities left.’” Somehow, additional objects surfaced “in the storehouse that exists in the homes and institutions of Forsyth County,” but Frank could see “a noticeable decline in number of the Moravian items coming to our attention.” His response was to work harder than ever, searching farther afield than ever, to discover the essential furnishings and decorative arts required so that Old Salem could bring “a unique heritage the national attention it so richly deserves.”¹⁹²

During those first formative years, Old Salem, Inc. owed much of its success to the cooperation extended by the Wachovia Historical

46. Frank Horton and Ralph P. Hanes supervise the restoration of the Winkler Bakery oven, Old Salem, 1967. *OSPC*.



Society, the Moravian Church, Salem Academy and College, the City of Winston-Salem, the Chamber of Commerce, and such groups as the Colonial Dames, the D.A.R., the garden clubs, and the Junior League, as well as countless individuals. But as Salem historian Frances Griffin wrote, "for the first twenty years of Old Salem restoration, the ultimate responsibility, the burden of decision, rested on two men: Ralph P. Hanes, Chairman of the Restoration Com-

mittee, and Frank L. Horton, Director of Restoration. Together they set and faithfully followed high standards of quality and integrity, thus firmly molding the character of the restoration during its formative years and establishing a precedent of excellence that has guided their successors.”¹⁹³

“Without Frank Horton, there wouldn’t be any Old Salem, because in the beginning there was Frank Horton,” Jim Gray said. “When the various crises at Old Salem came along, there was Frank, a gold mine of information about the buildings themselves and the early town of Salem.

“He was the resource guy. The rest of us contributed knowledge about fund-raising and knowledge about the community and other things, but without someone who knew what it was that we should restore, we would have been lost.”¹⁹⁴

When Frank Horton has heard himself called a founder of Old Salem, he has protested with his “characteristic modesty,” according to his old friend Jim Gray. “I was not a founder of Old Salem,” Frank has said. “Rather, I was drafted because of my work with Dr. Adelaide Fries.”¹⁹⁵ Besides, Frank believes that he has had “all the fun jobs around here.”¹⁹⁶

Still Flora Ann Bynum, Jim Gray, and others insist, “Without Frank Horton there wouldn’t be any Old Salem.”¹⁹⁷



A two-fold mission kept Frank Horton on the road often in 1951 and 1952—his quest for furnishings for Old Salem, and the hunt for southern antiques from North Carolina for the 1952 Antiques Forum exhibition.

He traveled to Williamsburg in 1952 for the Forum, and, in Richmond, he saw the landmark exhibit entitled “Southern Furniture 1640–1820.” He and his mother had lent several items to the show. Back in Winston-Salem after that journey, Frank resolved that “someday, somehow” there had to be a museum devoted to the art and crafts of the early South, from elegant tidewater homes to sim-

ple backcountry cabins. "We wanted to show that we did do something down here besides drink mint juleps," Frank said.¹⁹⁸

One significant repercussion of the 1952 exhibition was an expanding network of dealers, collectors, and museum people who were now actively interested in the acquisition and study of southern decorative arts. This very successful exhibition was also a catalyst for Frank's vision of the museum that would become MESDA. As Frank recalled it, "This exhibit introduced me to the fact that there were enough collectibles to be able to make a collection of southern decorative arts, not only furniture but paintings, silver, metals of various kinds, textiles, and so on. It interested my mother and it interested [me] . . . in beginning our own personal collection, to trade off things that we had collected, like Philadelphia furniture, for southern furniture. We began to trade off our collection with the idea there might be a museum some day."¹⁹⁹

The show had transformed Frank's emphasis as a private collector. Now, for their personal purchases, he and Theo began to concentrate on collecting southern antiquities, and on buying rooms of woodwork from southern houses that were going under the wrecking ball.

"I guess we were inspired by Winterthur," Frank said. "My mother and I both thought the thing to do was to collect some old rooms . . . and we did."²⁰⁰ His model was based in part on Henry Francis du Pont's plan for Winterthur in Delaware, but on a much more modest scale.

As a collector, he focused now on furnishings and decorative objects that were actually made in the South. With Theo's enthusiastic support, he set out on a quest to collect historic interiors as well. Frank began combing the countryside for woodwork, paneling, mantels, doors, glass, and other materials that could be bought or rescued from old houses that stood in ruins or were slated to be torn down. He would use these treasures in a house he would build for his mother and himself. He would resurrect the past in these rooms, and furnish them with the finest southern-made antiques he could

lay his hands on. When he died, the house would become a museum.²⁰¹

Gradually, however, he began to confront the practical challenge of welding different rooms from different dwellings, all with different dimensions and shapes, into one coherent structure. Even with Frank's growing knowledge of architecture and design, this was a daunting prospect, and, he began to concede, an impractical if not crazy idea. It "proved to be very difficult to do and make a pleasant place to live, with usable doors and windows and so on," Frank explained to a journalist. "And where would you put the home? Out in Buena Vista?"²⁰² (Buena Vista is an upscale neighborhood across town from Old Salem). Frank's museum would simply have to have an overall design that would encompass the various rooms that he could see so clearly in his head.

Meanwhile, he had his hands full at Old Salem, where he usually worked seven days a week by choice, and still without pay, also by choice. He began writing articles, publishing his first one, "New Thoughts on Eighteenth-Century Lighting," in *The Magazine ANTIQUES* in January 1955. In his numerous thoughtful essays, some of them the product of groundbreaking research, Frank's prose is clean, spare, and unobtrusive. The focus is on well-documented facts. The expertise of a scholar merges with the clarity of a journalist. A quiet, unassuming authority emanates from Frank's writing, and his enthusiasm shines between the lines.

In September of 1960, he wrote about the promise of Old Salem. "It is my firm conviction that the restoration of Old Salem presents us with opportunities to go far beyond the usual criteria in presenting a picture of the past," he reflected. While the "pot-boiling of Americanism" led to "an early mixing of ideas and customs" from various cultures, the Moravians in Salem "with their German traits of thoroughness and thrift, together with the barrier of their language and their religious customs" fostered the preservation of "a closely knit grouping of records, buildings and artifacts that progress of civilization would otherwise have trod underfoot." Consequently,

Frank observed, there was “an almost unique” opportunity to restore Old Salem houses with many of their original furnishings.²⁰³ He was fully committed to the challenge of showing history in context. The authentic juxtaposition of “records, buildings, and artifacts” could breathe life into the past—in Old Salem, and beyond.



Submerged as he was in his incessantly demanding work at Old Salem, Frank still remained a devoted son at home. His brother Miles had moved from Winston-Salem to Charlottesville, Virginia. In 1953, Miles married Ruth Cline, a registered nurse from Harrisonburg, Virginia in the Shenandoah Valley. They had met while they both were studying at the University of Virginia. Ruth, a Navy nurse, was working on a B.S. degree when she and Miles happened to be enrolled in the same class. He asked a friend to introduce them, and, as Ruth recalled, “We got to be a twosome, and dated for two years, and married in the summer of 1953, the year after we graduated. He was a librarian at the Woman’s College in Greensboro at that time.”²⁰⁴

Ruth Horton is a bright, plain-spoken woman who maintained cordial relationships with her husband’s mother as well as his father, despite the very separate lives they led. Early in their courtship, Miles took Ruth to Winston-Salem for a weekend to introduce her to Theo and Frank, and they became good friends. Miles also took Ruth to meet his father. “We were good pals, and had a good understanding,” Ruth Horton remembered. “Our medical background gave us a good basis for our friendship.”²⁰⁵

Her medical background would also figure in her relationship with Theo, whose health problems worsened during the early 1950s until something drastic clearly had to be done about her debilitating heart disease. The only solution, her physician believed, was surgery. “Her Winston-Salem doctor (Bruce Brooks) helped to make the arrangements for her to go to Georgetown [University Hospital] for the surgery,” Ruth recalled.

She had the arrangements made before anyone in the family knew, except Dr. Brooks . . . She had it all arranged, down to the price, and she told me I was to take her to Washington and stay with her until she was ready to come back. The family had had a live-in nurse for [Theo's] parents—Bright Wilson—and Bright considered the family her piece of property. I liked Bright and she adored Miles. She helped raise the boys. She was a member of the family. She lived in the home and so forth . . . She was very upset with me when we got back from Washington. "You should have called me," she said. "Why did you do this?"

Because I was told," I answered. I respected my mother-in-law, as she did me. She taught me a great deal, just about living. We had a few disagreements, but nothing to amount to anything. She respected someone who would stand up to her. I didn't sass her, of course. I just made sure I wasn't walked on.²¹⁶

Ruth's memories and Theo's diary entries confirm that after she recovered from her heart surgery in 1955, Theo's health was better than it had been in many years. "The surgeon said if she lived seven years then the operation would be a success," Ruth recalled, "and she lived seventeen years."²¹⁷

As her health improved, Theo took a renewed interest in antiquing. She and Frank enjoyed talking over potential purchases. On May 28, 1958, Theo wrote in her diary, "Helped Frank a little with his lowboy. I like the one we had better, but know this is rarer, and it is what we wanted. That is what counts to me."²¹⁸

With Theo's enthusiastic moral and financial support, Frank had continued collecting interiors from historic buildings. By 1958 they had stored away materials from several rooms that would come to life again at MESDA—two Queen Anne rooms from Hertford County, North Carolina; rooms from Edenton and Chowan in North Carolina; an Edgewood room; and a room from Whitehall, South Carolina. But Frank and Theo were collectors of interiors, not scavengers, and they refused to intrude on dwellings such as Christ's Cross, or Criss Cross, in New Kent County, Virginia, or any other structures that were sound enough to be restored on site. In the case of Christ's Cross, Frank later reproduced the 1690 room at



47. Theo H. Taliaferro admiring a portrait in her Reynolda Road home, 1957. *FHC*.

MESDA. It was only when houses were at risk of ruin or demolition that Frank and Theo would buy historic interiors that caught their interest.

"The woodwork is wonderful but I cannot conceive of removing same from such a house," he wrote to an antique dealer who wanted to sell him another interior. "I hope that someone along the line will use better judgement [sic] than to strip this fine house of its integrity."²⁰⁹

"Knowledge, patience, and persistence are three of the attributes that make Frank a great collector," Luke Beckerdite observed.²¹⁰ Now well-armed with these attributes, Frank Horton, with Theo's unswerving encouragement and support, was gathering an authentic collection of Moravian furnishings for Old Salem. At the same time, he was outfitting his dream house/museum with walls and mantels, chandeliers and floor, all the better to set off the furniture and decorative arts he and his mother had been collecting for years.

As the Old Salem houses took shape, Frank and Theo kept up the hunt for rooms and furnishings from settlements, colonies, and towns beyond Old Salem, stashing them away in storage, biding their time. They had the support of Miles Horton as well. After Frank's eagle eyes spied an interior in a ramshackle house in Virginia, he tracked down the owner of the house and confirmed a price. Then he turned to his brother to arrange and oversee the work of having the interior panels and other appurtenances dismantled, carefully labeled, and safely delivered to Frank in Winston-Salem.²¹¹

From boyhood Frank and Miles sustained a close relationship with their father, visiting when they could, traveling with him from time to time, and corresponding regularly. As Dr. Horton aged, Frank took over many of his business affairs. As his health failed, Frank moved him into a "combination hospital and retirement home" in Southern Pines, North Carolina, Ruth Horton recalled. Dr. Horton "practiced on the staff there for a while, but never went to see patients. Then he got so he wasn't able to."²¹²

Dr. Horton had never remarried, although he had a companion in Raleigh for several years, a vivacious woman with "a delightful sense of humor," Ruth remembered. She knew the "whole Horton family."²¹³

Theo occasionally saw her former husband over the years, and often sent him a turkey at Thanksgiving or Christmas, or other gifts, borne by their sons as emissaries. He spoke affectionately of Theo in his letters to Frank.

On October 19, 1958, Theo's phone rang with some alarming news. Dr. Horton had suffered a cerebral hemorrhage the night be-

48. Dr. Miles C. Horton
and companion, 1939.
FHC.



fore and was “sinking rapidly.” Theo recounted the next events in her diary:

October 19: “We left at 9:45 am. He died about twenty minutes till four pm.[sic] We gathered all his things, made arrangements for him to be taken to Raleigh.”

October 20: “Dr. Horton buried today in Raleigh, NC. The boys went to Raleigh to attend their father’s funeral.”²¹⁴

She was with him with when he died, but Theo did not attend Dr. Horton’s funeral. Instead, she stayed at home and rested, with her friends coming to the house on Reynolda Road to keep her

company. She saved his obituary in her diary. Cause of death was given as a heart attack. He was survived by two brothers, Robert and Roger, both doctors, and his two sons, Miles, Jr. and Frank. Dr. Miles Christopher Horton was 82 years old when he died. After Frank, Miles and Ruth returned from Raleigh, Theo privately complained that she heard “nothing about the funeral to amount to anything.”²¹⁵



In 1959, Frank Liipfert Horton received his first major award for his pioneering work as Director of Restoration for Old Salem—the Cannon Cup given by the North Carolina Society for the Preservation of Antiquities. His first decade in Old Salem was defined by major change. While he had focused on the acquisition, restoration, and furnishing of Old Salem houses and shops, others were hard at work on other projects—such as the Old Salem Bypass. Restoration work and visitors to Old Salem were hampered by the heavy traffic. Smoke and vibrations took their toll on vulnerable old buildings. Efforts to re-route traffic out of and around Old Salem began as early as 1951, and finally, in 1955, with Governor Luther Hodges leading the way, funds were appropriated for the bypass. Work started in 1956; on August 27, 1958, the four-lane bypass opened; and, in 1960, it was officially christened Old Salem Road. Once again the streets within the Old Salem were relatively quiet. Soon afterward, Frank Horton and his mother began to think about selling the large house over on Reynolda Road and buying a house in Old Salem. That way Frank, who worked all the time, could walk to his office.

In the spring of 1960, they were seriously looking at the Reich house at 813 South Church Street in Old Salem. In numerous 1960 diary entries, Theo Taliaferro traced their progress. On March 23 she wrote, “Went down to get the key to the Reich House. Frank went with us and we looked at the house again. I wanted just Mary [Liipfert] and me to go so we could discuss some things that men don’t understand, but I let Mary go in for the key. Result: she and Frank



49. Frank and Theo
outside the Reich
House, c. 1965. *FHC*.

took up the entire time talking about the brick chimney. Nothing accomplished so far as I was concerned. I did bring plans home."²¹⁶

Ruth and Miles Horton joined her on March 27 for a drive to Old Salem, and a look at the backyard of the Reich House. "We could hear frogs down at the creek," Theo wrote.²¹⁷ By April, their plans for renovations were well underway. Theo and Frank inspected the house on April 3: "Frank wanted to examine the partitions up stairs to see where he would put his bath . . . I will have a good sized linen closet up on the hall, and Frank will probably take large space at front hall as an office. Most of the work and expense will be upstairs."²¹⁸

By October 1960, interior work on the Reich house was well un-

derway. On Sunday, October 30, after a breakfast of juice and cereal, followed by grits, sausage, and fried tomatoes, Theo and Frank rode over to Salem to see the wooden cabinets being installed in the Christoph Vogler House. "I think I'll have the same but in natural colors," Theo wrote. "I surely hope they will let me supervise the shelving."²¹⁹

Their attention turned to politics on November 8, 1960. According to Theo, "We went to the polls and cast our vote for Mr. Richard Nixon. Never have I seen such a crowd voting before . . . Frank and I listened to returns on T.V. [sic] until 11:15. Looks like Mr. Kennedy will be our next President. I think I'll start my bomb shelter as soon as possible."²²⁰ She did indeed collect plans and guidelines for constructing a bomb shelter, and her 1961 diary contains a cryptic entry: "August 10, 1961: Sheler [sic] started."²²¹

Frank did not want his mother to build a bomb shelter, but Theo was determined to do so, and she did. It was dug into the lower level of the terraced backyard, about thirty yards behind the Reich House. Consequently, the historic earth of Old Salem harbored at least two sanctuaries from the perils of the nuclear age, the other being the Civil Defense shelter established at the Single Brothers House.²²² In that anxious atomic era, Theo Horton was not alone in Winston-Salem or in the nation in her zeal to construct a shelter that would protect her family from nuclear fallout.

But Frank, perhaps more grounded in the antiquarian past than in the uncertain future, attempted to reason with his mother. "Well, Mother," he said one day, "what if something happens, and we go in the shelter and lock the door, and there's a knock on the outside of the door, and we open it, and it's the Mearses [their neighbors], and they want to come in—"

"Oh, I'd let them in, Frank. They're our friends," Theo said.

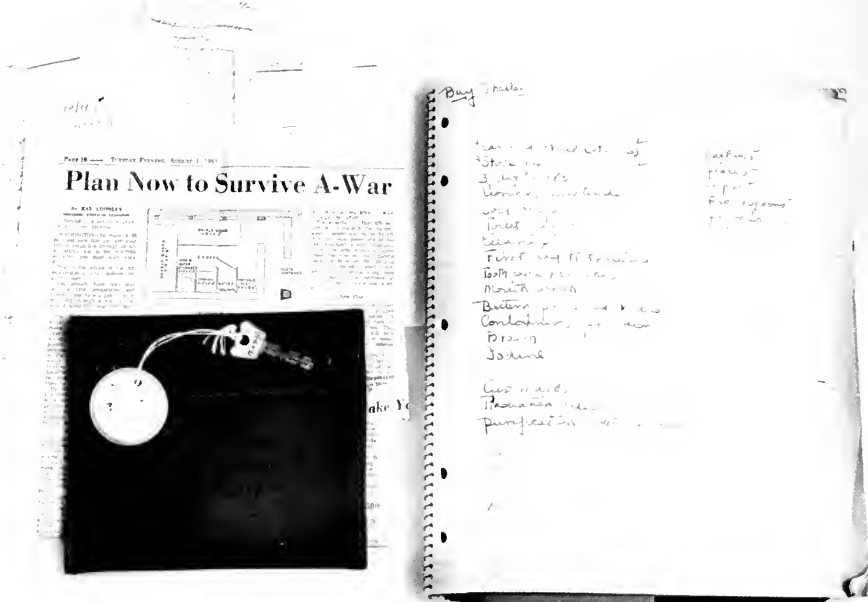
"Well how about Roy Campbell from Salem College?"

"Oh, I'd let him in," Theo assured Frank.

"And what about Mrs. Pinkston from across the street?"

"Of course, I'd let her in, too."

"Well, Mother," Frank pointed out, "there are going to be a lot of



50. Theo's fallout shelter paraphernalia.
FHC.

people living in this bomb shelter with us, and we're not going to have enough food."²²³

Apparently Theo had not thought about those logistics. Regardless, the bomb shelter was built, stocked with food, bedding, medicines, and other supplies, and sealed with a steel door.

Over the years, vines grew up over the door. One day Frank came to work and told Brad Rauschenberg, "I think I've got a visitor at home . . . I keep seeing this man coming and going behind my house. I think he's living in the bomb shelter."

Frank didn't want to call the police, however, or change the lock on the door.



51. Theo Taliaferro, "Pywacky" (on Theo's lap), and unidentified four-legged friend (on floor) at home in the Reich House, c. 1962. *FHC*.

"I don't care," he said. "Let him live down there and eat all the food. It makes no difference to me."

Eventually the man moved on, and a few years later, the bomb shelter had another occupant. One afternoon, Miller Williams, who had kept house and cooked for the family for years, called Frank at the office, and told him he had to come home because the bomb shelter was on fire. The fire department extinguished the fire, and, Brad remembered, the bomb shelter "went down hill after that."²²⁴



In the final entry in her diary for 1960, Theo Horton Taliaferro wrote, "1901 Reynolda Road for the last Christmas, I presume . . . Next year we will be at 813 South Church Street, God willing."²²⁵

On March 16, 1961, Theo and Frank spent their first night at 813 South Church Street. Next morning, Theo wrote, "Frank and I made our breakfast for the 1st time in our new kitchen. It was delicious. Many kinks to be ironed out."²²⁶ They were adjusting to a much smaller space and, Theo complained, "My bathroom is a far

cry from 1701 Reynolda Road. The tile floor was like ice . . . television reception is very poor."²²

Gradually, though, they made themselves comfortably at home in the Reich House, built in 1824 by Christoph Reich, a Moravian tin-smith and coppersmith. When Reich died before his house was completed, his son Jacob took over. Jacob then lived in the house with his widowed mother, Catherina Transou, and carried out his work. He also worked in the sheet-iron trade. In 1832, Jacob Reich built a separate shop to house his business. He was the father of William Augustus Reich, a magician of some regional fame, known as Gus Rich, the Wizzard [sic] of the Blue Ridge.

By 1961, Frank Horton, current occupant of the Reich house, was something of a magician and a wizard himself, gaining appreciative recognition for his pathbreaking work at Old Salem. In addition to overseeing the smallest details of the restorations and the furnishings, Frank was compiling documentation as methodically and faithfully as the old Moravians themselves had done. On index cards eventually tallying in the thousands, he and his colleagues constructed detailed records about the history of each building, as well as the men, women, and children who had inhabited them. His parallel mission was the acquisition of southern antiquities and interiors, and these were carefully recorded in his files as well.

By 1960, Frank and Theo had decided that they were ready to move forward with plans for their museum. On March 9, 1960, the Executive Committee of the Old Salem Board of Trustees received an offer from Frank Horton to build a museum that would accommodate the Horton-Taliaferro collection of early southern decorative arts. If Old Salem would set aside the ground at the south end of the historic district, Frank and Theo would pay all the costs of designing, constructing, and furnishing the museum. Frank would trade the Eberhardt House, which he owned, for the land on which the new museum would be situated. The Executive Committee accepted the proposal.

On June 23, 1960, Frank revised his plans when he learned of the possible availability of the Kroger grocery store building just across

from the proposed site for the museum. A new plan evolved: Frank and Theo would redesign the existing Kroger building and pay to have it renovated, complete with modern heating and air conditioning. Old Salem would provide the building in exchange for the Eberhardt House. The major part of the facility would be used as the museum; the rest of the structure would house offices, shops for the preparation of Old Salem exhibits, and storage areas for restoration materials and artifacts.²²⁸ The plan was firmly in place by spring of 1961, when Old Salem bought the Kroger building. Later on, a gift from Mrs. H. Frank Forsyth reimbursed Old Salem for that purchase. As agreed, Frank and Theo paid to have the grocery store converted into a museum building.²²⁹

In November of 1960, Frank and Theo formally offered to donate their collections to Old Salem for display in the new museum. In 1963, with the gift of 9,264 shares of R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company common stock, they set up a generous endowment fund for their long-dreamed-about, newly established Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts.²³⁰ Already, Old Salem secretaries typing documents and reports about the project had taken to calling it MESDA for short, and the acronym stuck.

In Frank Horton's mind and in the surviving records, it is clear that mother and son were co-founders of MESDA. It was Theo Horton Taliaferro who bore the cost of most of the improvements to the new museum building, paying for a new facade, and for the modern heating, lighting, and cooling systems. Frank devoted his resources to paying for additional interiors and other materials essential for the completion of the rooms themselves.

Frank and Theo had, over the years, already collected interiors and antiquities enough to assemble at least eleven authentic, beautifully designed rooms, and these were installed by May of 1962. But Frank was a visionary and a dreamer—and far more remained to be done. Even so, MESDA was already attracting national attention for its singular mission.

But how did all these trappings fit into the Old Salem picture? Charles B. Wade, Jr., president of the Old Salem Board of Trustees,

expressed it this way in his May 24, 1961 report: "The acquisition of [the Kroger property] has enabled us to broaden our horizons, whetting our ambition to interpret the Old Salem story in relation to its surrounding environment . . . It is expected that this museum will add scope and meaning to the story that Old Salem has to tell, showing the Moravian efforts in Wachovia in better and more understandable relation to the south [sic] of which it was and is a part."²¹¹

V

By the time MESDA opened to the public on January 4, 1965, fifteen rooms and four exhibit galleries had been designed, installed, decorated, and polished—and staffed with experienced guides accustomed to taking visitors through Old Salem buildings. On January 2 there was a MESDA preview party for the people who worked at Old Salem. To her chagrin, Theo Horton Taliaferro, sick with a cold, was too ill to attend. "In bed all day with cold so can't help my boy over at MESDA tonight," she fretted.²¹² Frank was home by ten, just in time to see *Gun Smoke*, one of his favorite television programs. (He usually enjoyed a bowl of his favorite ice cream while watching *Gun Smoke*.) He reported that everything "went very well" and promised Theo that the next day, Sunday, he would take "a true day of rest." She knew that he needed it.²¹³

On January 4, 1965, special guests had been invited to tour the new museum before the public opening January 5. Theo was still in bed with a cold, but Miles and Ruth Horton accompanied Frank to MESDA. The evening was a great success. Theo complained in her diary that night about one wealthy patron who arrived so late for the event that Frank had to arrange a special showing for her. "Seems the richer you are, the more inconsiderate of other people you are," Theo wrote. Then she sang the praises of two of her wealthy Winston-Salem friends: "Mr. Babcock sent me lovely red roses. Ralph Hanes sent me a beautiful orchid. Raising just WILL show through!" She and Frank were inundated with congratulatory telephone calls.

She was thrilled with the course of events. Most of all, Theo was happy for her son. Before she went to sleep the night of January 4, she wrote, "I am truly proud of my boy."²³⁴



Frank Horton has always kept his eyes simultaneously on his dream and his vision as well as the undergirding details. From the day the MESDA doors opened, visitors have enjoyed the journey into history, in large part because of the meticulous care given to each carefully chosen object in every MESDA room and gallery. Frank thought of other practical concerns as well. For instance, there were the heel protectors—small pads distributed to female guests who came to MESDA wearing spike heel shoes. They were respectfully asked to cover the heels of their shoes with these pads before setting foot on MESDA floors. As Frank himself explained to a journalist, spike heeled shoes were "very stylish and very becoming, but disastrous to floors."²³⁵

From the beginning, Frank saw education as one of the fundamental purposes of MESDA. He walked with MESDA guides back through time as it exists in the rooms and galleries in the museum. The first class for MESDA escorts, as they were called in the early days, heard Frank explain the significance of the museum's name:

MUSEUM—not a house museum, though our displays are largely placed in room settings. . . .

AN ART MUSEUM—arranged to show articles in an interesting manner, but according to types or period - the visitor conducted by tours.

OF EARLY—1640–1820—Jacobean thru [sic] the neo-Classic periods (Federal)

SOUTHERN—Maryland, Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, and in the later periods, Kentucky and Tennessee

DECORATIVE ARTS—those things of our daily lives—architecture—furniture—silver—pewter—ironware—textiles—the graphic arts (this last category perhaps approaching "fine arts.")²³⁶

Sometimes Frank's words were taped in training sessions as he commented on highlights of each room: the architecture of the reconstructed Criss Cross Room; the joint stool in the Pocomoke Room; the desk and bookcase in the Chowan Room; the walnut drop leaf table in the Queen Anne Parlor; the button-foot table in the Queen Anne Bedroom; the Edenton gaming table in the Edenton Parlor; the painted chest in the Piedmont Room; the Baltimore pier table in White Hall; the corner cupboard in a gallery.

A MESDA "hostess test" was administered on January 3, 1967 to those aspiring to guide visitors through the MESDA rooms. After their training, they were shown twenty slides of objects in the collection and asked to explain "the most important interpretive points" to be made about them. Six additional slides were the focus of several more questions, including the following challenges:

Identify and tell of [the] object's significance. How can you use the identity of this object in the interpretation of objects in the MESDA collection?

Identify furniture form, period, principal turnings. How can you use the main turning to illustrate a point in MESDA?²³⁷

MESDA's time span reaches from 1640 to 1820. The museum concentrates on the "diverse histories of Maryland, Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, Kentucky and Tennessee," and the three "culturally divided regions: the Chesapeake, the Carolina Low Country, and the Back Country."²³⁸ By the year 2000, visitors could visit twenty-four period rooms and six galleries, furnished with more than two thousand items produced and/or used in the early South. Scholars in 2000 could examine records and photographs of more than 28,000 objects in the decorative arts of the South, and survey computerized records of more than 75,000 artisans who were at work in the South before 1820.

Over time, an ambitious two-part research program evolved at MESDA. First, there would be the exhaustive survey of documentary records—census reports, inventories, wills and other court

records, letters, newspapers, and any other scrap of paper that might identify southern craftsmen and their work. Second, there would be the vigorous field work program, a quest to locate, document, and photograph historic examples of decorative arts throughout the South. The juxtaposition of these two ever-growing resource files in a central research center would transform existing and future knowledge about decorative arts in the South and beyond.

These artifacts, Frank believes, are more than interesting antiquities, or remnants of a lost time. They are tangible keys to our social, cultural, regional, and national history—keys to who we are and where we came from.

When he was not collecting antiquities, overseeing the ongoing restoration work at Old Salem, and designing and installing exhibits at MESDA, Frank was writing about his work. *The Magazine ANTIQUES* carried two articles by Frank L. Horton in the July 1965 issue—"Salem Interiors" and "Johannes Krause, Master Joiner of Salem." In the fall of 1965, that year of MESDA's opening, the American Association of State and Local History honored Frank with an award of merit "for distinguished scholarly and philanthropic contributions to American history" in establishing the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts.²³⁹ The young man who had dreaded his history classes had transformed himself into the designer, founder, and curator of one of the most remarkable museums of art and history in the United States.



One day in 1966, Brad Rauschenberg was down on his hands and knees working in a pit at an archaeological dig in the Moravian village of Bethabara, North Carolina. He had been working for three years as an archaeologist at Bethabara, the small settlement built in 1753 by the Moravians in Wachovia before work was begun to build Salem.

As Brad used a trowel to prepare the site for photographs, he no-

ticed that a man was standing on the side of the pit, as tourists and curiosity seekers often did. Soon he heard a voice: "Is your name Brad?"

He looked up and answered, "Yes."

"Would you like to come work for me?" the stranger asked.

Remembering the encounter, Brad said,

What I first noticed about him when I looked up was white socks. Stark white socks. I said, "Well, who are you?" And he said, "My name is Frank Horton, and I do different things down at Old Salem. We've just opened up a new museum called MESDA, and I need somebody to do archaeology down at Old Salem." I said, "Well, that sounds interesting."²⁴⁰

Frank drove Brad to Old Salem that day and the next as they began to make arrangements for what would be nearly four decades of work together. On that second trip to Old Salem, Frank took Brad home for lunch with Theo, and the ever-present Miller Williams, who had sworn that she would look after Frank until they were both at least ninety, and would nearly do so.²⁴¹

Within two weeks, having finished his work at Bethabara, Brad immediately went to work at Old Salem as an antiquarian, a title assigned to his job by Frank Horton. "He opened up a whole new world to me—furniture and all other decorative art," Brad recalled.

He liked the fact that I knew about identifying and dating ceramics . . . and I began excavating different sites here in Salem. Then, because I was single, Frank used to ask me to go on trips with him to look at objects. It was during that continual going into homes and shops and going on road trips that I became conscious of all the southern decorative arts that were out there. Frank was my Winterthur, so to speak.²⁴²

Frank Horton was on a mission, and Brad Rauschenberg was his willing and able disciple. On behalf of Old Salem and MESDA, they were pioneering, often inventing their strategy and methodology as they went along. Brad brought with him to Old Salem an interest in photography and a Sears Roebuck camera. He developed his skills as a photographer and they acquired the equipment needed



52. Frank Horton and Brad Rauschenberg at work in the field, c. 1976. *OSPC*.

to take documentary photographs of furnishings and other decorative arts. “That gave us tremendous leverage in beginning the field research program which we started some years later,” Brad recalled.²⁴³

At first, they traveled to find and purchase furnishings for the buildings being restored in Old Salem. “Every chance we had, I would take a photograph,” Brad said.

But we didn’t set out to take photographs . . . the trips we took were to buy a lot of objects for Old Salem. At that time we were furnishing the dining tavern, and one trip we came back in a station wagon with the two long benches that are on the front porch of the tavern upside down on top of the car, and roped between the upright feet of those long benches must have been twenty-five Windsor chairs. The entire car was packed with ceramics and chairs, and other things we had found for the Tavern, for MESDA, and for other buildings in Old Salem. Here,

around Piedmont North Carolina and sometimes Southside Virginia, Frank and I would go on weekends to locate window glass for Old Salem buildings because we were putting together buildings that would face Main Street and the Square. We wanted glass that had the appearance of being old, and at that time there were a lot of abandoned houses in fields. We would go out with a stack of newspapers to wrap the glass in. We'd also take along pliers, screwdrivers, and hammers so we could remove the little pins that held the glass in place and remove the caulking behind the sheets of glass.

We would make these weekend trips wherever anybody called and told us they had a house they wanted us to look at. Generally the house was falling in, and we would ask if we could have the glass, and they'd say, "Sure, go ahead." No one ever charged us, they just gave it to us once they found out what it was for. We'd come back with a lot of glass, and we stored it in our hardware room here at MESDA. Sometimes, if a house was going to be destroyed, we'd come back with old hardware, too.

That's how we were able to get a lot of things to help Old Salem along. And of course, in doing all this, people would say, "Why don't you come over to my house? I have so many old things." We'd go in, and all of a sudden, there would be decorative arts that we were seeing, but we didn't know what they were. I would try to take pictures of them, and soon after, I got some floodlights—big clumsy twelve-inch diameter floodlights—and I'd try to photograph objects.²⁴

Trip by trip, they were building an archive of photographs, a comprehensive index of objects they saw in the field, and a vital new reservoir of knowledge about southern decorative arts. Frank realized that they were encountering objects on the coast of North and South Carolina and Virginia that they couldn't identify because they didn't recognize all the woods lining the interiors of the pieces. Charles Montgomery, the curator at Winterthur, recommended that Frank send Brad to study for a month with Gordon Salter, who did all the wood analysis for Winterthur. Because Brad loved working with microscopes, he quickly understood the principles and techniques of wood analysis. This became an invaluable tool in the ongoing research at Old Salem and MESDA.

One of his acquaintances and fellow collectors christened Frank



53. Frank Horton and Ada Allen inspect the paint on the 1788 Gemeinhaus, Bethabara, c. 1970. *OSPC*.

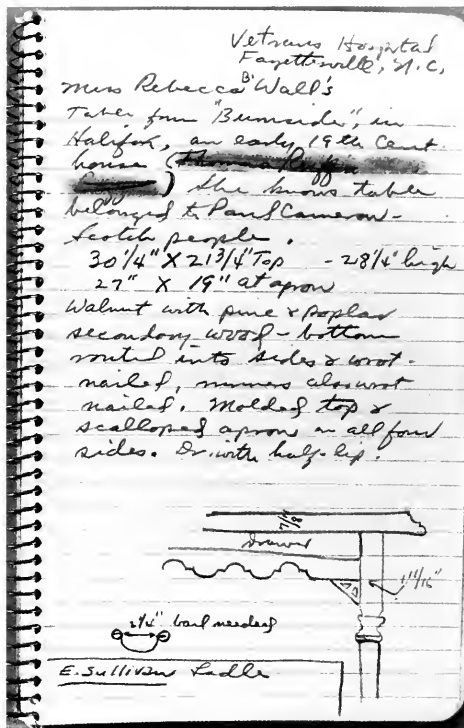
Horton “The Kilroy of Southern Furniture.” Wherever he went, Dr. Benjamin Caldwell said, Frank had always been there first. “When we met Frank, we saw immediately the fire that kindled this great man to accomplish his mission. His enthusiasm infected many of the people around him, such as John Bivins, Brad Rauschenberg, Luke Beckerdite . . . and others who worked so hard with him at MESDA. He was a man with a vision, he was a man possessed.”²⁴⁵

Frank Horton was becoming a magnet. His work attracted collectors, antique dealers, potential donors, researchers, and scholars—anyone with an interest in antiques. In their travels, according to Dr. Caldwell, Frank and Brad became “ambassadors of Southern [sic] decorative arts.”²⁴⁶

Frank’s mail brought letters and photographs about historic objects, and he and Brad began to spend more and more time on the road going to investigate. “Sometimes I’d get a telephone call Sunday afternoon late from Frank saying, ‘I’m going to pick you up at 6:30 in the morning. Be ready to go. We’re going up to Virginia for three days.’ And I’d go. That’s the way life was.”²⁴⁷

Frank was writing careful notes on index cards about every item they saw and photographed, as well as every object they heard about and hoped someday to see. These cards he arranged by states in a long filing box in the office. He had received so many inquiries about artifacts in North Carolina that he gave his home state its own box. Ever the sailor, Frank divided the cards in half—towns east of 79 degrees longitude and towns west of 79 degrees longitude. When he and Brad set off on a road trip, the boxes were loaded in the car so that in each town they visited, they could make telephone calls about items recorded on the cards. Mile by mile, card by card, they were accumulating unprecedented knowledge about early southern decorative arts.²⁴⁸ And, Brad Rauschenberg recalled, “In those first years, as the inquiries increased and those boxes filled up, we realized that there were some great leads that we could never go see because of time and all the other things we were doing. We thought we’d initiate a field research program.”²⁴⁹

They considered the prospect carefully, however, for the restoration of Old Salem still required most of Frank’s energy and attention. In 1967, 25,280 visitors toured Old Salem and MESDA during June, July, and August—the largest summer attendance in the history of the restored area up to that time. A total of 88,814 people visited Old Salem and MESDA from October 1, 1969 to October 1, 1970. Annual attendance climbed to 103,783 between November 1, 1970 and October 31, 1971. These throngs of visitors witnessed



54. Page from Frank Horton's fieldbook, c. 1965. OSPC.

restoration in motion. According to the 1969 *Annual Report* for Old Salem, Inc., for instance, "Frank Horton and his restoration forces have been rolling along in high gear for the past 12 [sic] months—completing five major restoration projects, making good headway on another and drawing plans for at least three others."²⁵⁰ In addition, the Gemein Haus at Bethabara was undergoing restoration.

Even in the midst of those ongoing projects for Old Salem, Frank

wanted to move forward with the MESDA field research program, although he knew it would demand continuous travel, most likely every other week for several years. Long before MESDA had opened its doors, Frank and Theo had acknowledged that there was far more to be revealed about early southern decorative arts than the MESDA period rooms alone could contain. The field research program was essential, in Frank's view, to the fullest possible discovery and documentation.

MESDA's first representative in the field was Milly McGehee, a Hollins College graduate, who was hired to work for a year in and around Wilmington, North Carolina. Brad described the strategy they used:

We supplied her with camera equipment and film, and a slide projector, with a slide tray telling the story of MESDA and some objects. She would give slide programs in Wilmington to Future Farmers of America or the Wilmington Historical Society, or garden clubs, or anyone who would let her come and give talks. At those talks, she would explain why she was down there. Then there was a chain reaction. People would come up afterward and invite her to come see their chest of drawers or other objects. She would develop her own list of people to see.

We provided a xeroxed copy of all our records, so she had a built-in reference immediately . . . She would take pictures and send the film back. I'd make two sets of prints, one for us and one for her. We'd number each picture . . . Frank would check off what he would like to see, and she would make all the appointments when there was enough to see. Frank and I would go down for a week, and we made several trips down that year to see what Milly found. . . .

When we'd get into a house, some of the things we had wanted to see would prove to be of interest, and we'd photograph those; some wouldn't; and we'd discover other things in the house that she didn't notice or hadn't seen because the people wouldn't let her into certain rooms. Oddly enough, they would sometimes keep the women in the field from seeing certain rooms, but when the men came from the museum, they'd let us in.²⁵¹

Although the Wilmington field research did not yield many early

southern furnishings, the experience confirmed Frank's instinct that the program would be worthwhile. A grant from the National Endowment for the Arts was followed by a an even larger grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and, as Brad recalled, "everything was off and running!"²⁵²

From Wilmington, the field work spread throughout eastern North Carolina. At one time, four researchers combed the region—Edenton, Halifax, Rocky Mount, Hertford, and smaller towns between, searching for treasures in attics, cellars, parlors, and bedrooms. Soon they were unearthing so many objects that Frank and Brad could not keep up with them.

"For many years, Frank and I were in the field every other week," Brad recalled, and their purpose was always clear.

We never did combine purchasing in the field and doing research. We knew that once we got into an area under the guise of recording things for the museum, if we tried to acquire things, word would get around very quickly and the doors would be shut. That was an absolutely tight guideline, and it worked. People really accepted us.²⁵³

Their efforts were producing concrete results. According to the Final Report to the National Endowment for the Arts, tangible outcomes from the NEA-funded field research project included a "Data File on craftsmen and decorative arts produced in the south [sic] in the eighteenth and early nineteenth [sic] centuries." This file included research in four geographic areas of North Carolina and a survey of 15,600 issues of ninety-one newspapers. Over 400 photographs were made of ninety-six objects at forty-two locations in the Wilmington area, where 217 prospects were interviewed. Researchers were able to establish a pattern of furniture styles produced in the area.²⁵⁴ And the work was just beginning.

Their research was informing their work at Old Salem and MESDA and at institutions throughout the United States, exciting scholars, researchers, and collectors alike. Furthermore, it was taking on a personal dimension that Frank Horton and his colleagues had not anticipated: It was enlightening the people whose homes held the

furniture and art objects being studied. As Brad Rauschenberg explained, "An unexpected but valuable byproduct of our work, that we didn't know was going to happen, was our enhancement of people's understanding of the objects they owned, and, through that, their understanding of their own material culture heritage."²⁵⁵

On February 1, 1972, Frank Horton, now a legend in his field, was in Williamsburg to give a lecture at the Antiques Forum. Some catalytic words spoken there in 1949 had traveled by word of mouth to Frank Horton's ears, and had helped to set him on the pathway toward MESDA. His lecture that February day in 1972 was entitled "Discoveries Since 1952 Antiques Forum." He offered a recapitulation of two decades of work:

When I think of the last twenty years and the changes that have taken place in our attitudes toward southern decorative arts I am sometimes surprised at the amount of new information that has been published and, at the same time, sometimes appalled at the very slow change in the attitudes of the layman and the antiquary as to what an article of southern manufacture should look like . . . But, let me assure you, there is an awakening, be it ever so slow—as all good conservative southerners would have it!—to the arts of the agrarian South. It seems that we in the South have come to realize that whatever we did, be it ever so humble or ever so sophisticated, it is part of our American decorative arts history and should be recorded. It is this recording, of course, which will slowly overcome our prejudices. There are already many bright spots of awakening through research in the South today.²⁵⁶

One of the brightest, of course, is MESDA, or, as many people have affectionately called it, Frank's Place.



From time to time, some people have characterized Frank Horton as brusque, impatient, opinionated. Some of those impressions may be traced to the field work experience, where, Brad said, "Sometimes we were rather abrupt when we went into a house because we just couldn't take the time to sit down on the sofa and so-



55. Frank Horton in the field, c. 1970. *OSPC*.

cialize. We let the field researcher handle that. If I have a regret, it's that we didn't have more time to talk to people and be sociable."²⁶

Frank and Brad quickly learned, however, that they needed a field researcher to run interference for them so they could make the most efficient use of time and opportunity. The field researcher, said Brad,

would take us to a house and introduce us, and sometimes take notes, but more importantly, she would keep the homeowner busy, keep the homeowner off our backs until we were finished. We found out very

quickly that when Frank and I alone went somewhere to work on something, the homeowner would want to talk to us the whole time, and we couldn't get our work done. When we went to a house we were on a time frame, sometimes forty minutes. Often the homeowner was interested in telling us everything about a piece, and serving us tea and cake, with neighbors invited over—and all our time would be used up. We'd never have an opportunity to photograph the piece. It could be very frustrating.²⁴⁸

Frank and Brad developed their field research style and a protocol as they went along, occasionally resorting to subterfuge to protect the feelings of people they were visiting. As Brad recounted it,

We learned not to unload our cameras and take them into a house until we had determined that there were objects worth photographing. At the beginning, I would routinely take the cameras in with me, but sometimes we would visit a home and be disappointed in what we had come to see. Then we would set up the camera and pretend to photograph the object, to appease the owner. We didn't want to disappoint the homeowner. We didn't want word to get around that there were a couple of roughnecks out photographing and insulting people. There was a certain social understanding that developed with us over the years—field research manners that we had to develop. That doesn't come with the first trip—it comes with the second and grows over the years. We became polished, so to speak, and our efficiency naturally increased . . . but also our ability to discern objects very quickly. We could walk through a house quickly and know what was there, what we wanted to photograph and what we didn't. Our first years, we did a lot of stumbling around, and a lot of unnecessary photography. But as our knowledge increased—for instance, the ability to do wood analysis—our efficiency increased.²⁴⁹

There were unexpected occupational hazards in field work, however. On one trip, Frank and Brad were driving through southern Virginia when, as Brad told it, they

spied an old house under some trees in a cow pasture. A big two-and-a-half story house with double chimneys. It was falling in, and it was loaded with old glass. One thing you do in field research, especially looking for glass and objects, is to take binoculars in the car so you can see



56. Frank Horton
patiently waiting for an
appointment in the field,
c. 1974. *OSPC*.

what is on people's front porches, and also to see the bonding of the bricks which may help you judge the age of the house before you take the trouble to drive up to it. Many of the older houses sat far off the road.

We found out who owned the house and got permission to go in and take the glass out. Frank and I pulled the car up into the yard next to the house. We were in the house taking the glass out, and the plaster was falling down around us. Out of the corner of my eye, I happened to notice that our station wagon was bouncing back and forth. I looked over and a group of huge hogs had come out of the field, and one of them was

57. Frank Horton in the field, early 1970s. *OSPC*.



scratching himself on our car. These were long Virginia hogs, and the whole car was moving back and forth, back and forth. I called Frank over and we couldn't believe it. We picked up some chunks of plaster and threw them at that pig to get him to move on. Even so, he dented part of our car.²⁶¹

Frank and Brad were often invited to enjoy refreshments when they called on people. This was especially true at Christmas time, they found, and egg nog in particular got to be a problem during that festive season. Brad remembered that "If you were calling on eight houses a day, you couldn't do your work and partake of Christmas goodies, especially egg nog. I didn't know there were so



58. Frank Horton in the field, c. 1976. *OSPC*.

many kinds of egg nog, and I would often, when nobody was looking, just pour it into a plant."²⁶¹

One of Brad's most memorable adventures with Frank Horton took place on a hilly road in western Virginia. They were traveling to an appointment, and Frank was driving, Brad recalled.

The field researcher was in the passenger seat, and I was in the back seat. We were late for an appointment. We were going fast over the hills of the back country. We crested a hill and met a highway patrol car that was going the other way. He didn't have to have his radar on to tell that we were speeding. I turned around in the back seat to see what he was doing. He was already at the next hill, and I saw his blue light come on.

I said, "Frank, he's coming after you."

Frank said, "Well, he's not going to get me."

All of a sudden another side of Frank popped up that I had never seen before. Frank floored it, and he kept going over the hills. The field researcher was very nervous up there in the front seat, and I was saying in my own mind, "I can't believe Frank is doing this!"

The highway patrolman was several hills behind us, coming after. Then Frank said, "That's what I've been looking for!" Just as he went over the top of a hill, there was a dirt road going up into the woods. Frank flipped the car in there, and I thought it was Thunder Road in North Georgia for a while. Frank pulled the car up in the bushes and the trees, and turned the engine off. Through all the foliage we could see that blue light pass us and keep on going down the road. Then Frank backed out into the road, reversed direction, and we went up the road a few miles and headed for our destination a different way.

I said, "Frank, why did you do it?"

He answered, "Well, I didn't want to take the time to get a ticket."²⁶²



During their years of field research, Frank Horton and Brad Rauschenberg wore out four station wagons, and themselves. "When we did that field research program, we seized the moment," Brad reflected.

We didn't know at the time that we had to do it right then, but in retrospect, I know that we had to do it then because everything came together. Now the degree of difficulty and the expense would be totally different, and the combination of people which enabled us to do it.

We were pioneering, Lewis and Clark. It felt like that at times. We'd leave on a trip, and when we came back we'd know so much more. We'd develop the pictures and lay them out on the floor, and everyone would come in—guides, local collectors. There would be great excitement. Those were great times because everyone fed on our discoveries. We began to build up this regional knowledge that people were not really conscious of before. All those files are here now, in place.²⁶³

The years of doing field research were very exciting years for



59. Frank Horton in the field, c. 1976. *OSPC*.

Frank Horton and his colleagues. It was painstaking, often frustrating work, but there were treasures to be discovered. “That’s what kept us going over those years—discovery,” Brad Rauschenberg reflected. “And, of course, the grant we were under, and the field researchers, and the tremendous excitement out in the field about what we were doing, not only in the South, but up North. People would come from all over to see what we were doing.”²¹⁴

The success of the field work program led to other important programs at MESDA, such as the artisan research program that surveyed all available newspapers published in the South prior to 1821, along with wills, inventories, and other sources that might yield information about the artisans and craftsmen who had actually produced the furniture and art objects MESDA researchers were documenting in such abundance. That research still continues today. Because there was now national interest in the discoveries being made, MESDA needed a vehicle for the outreach and dissemination of research. Consequently, in 1975 the award-winning *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts* was founded. The Members of MESDA group was formed, and membership fees helped to fund the



60. Frank Horton
researching the August
heat in Savannah or
Charleston, c. 1970.
OSPC.

Journal. These endeavors fed each other. As research results accrued, and the MESDA files began to bulge with index cards, photographs, and slides, it was apparent that the MESDA database would support educational activities—slide shows, lectures, and seminars at the museum and elsewhere.²⁶⁵

In his lectures and slide shows, Frank Horton summarizes the mission of MESDA with economy: "It is the purpose of this museum to recognize and study the decorative arts of the South, to publish material on the subject and, of course, to add scope to the interpretation of the Old Salem restoration program in Winston-Salem." Through the years he has worked to foster a better understanding of "southern furniture and its relation to the American decorative arts field."²⁶⁶ Expert historian that he is, he has succeeded in giving his discoveries context and perspective.

On October 1, 1966, Frank had addressed the American Forum at Pennsbury Manor, William Penn's home in Pennsylvania. His topic was "Southern Furniture of the Early Republic, 1785-1820," and part of his objective was to place his historical and geographical research in a national perspective:

Agriculture has always dominated the economy of the South. It does today, though there are a number of Chambers of Commerce, I am sure, who would take exception to this statement.

It is the urban society that produces the designs—"in the latest fashion," as it would be termed—and sets the pace for others to follow. Just as there is a recognized time lag between urban America's adaptation of the designs of the fashionable English cabinetmaker, so there was a further time lag between the American urban cabinetmaker's creation and its adaptation by the country or small town [sic] cabinetmaker. It is [through] this handing down of style, often from cabinetmakers of great talent, to ones of less ability, that we develop a national style.²⁶⁷

Frank Horton was leaving his own indelible national imprint. During the 1990s, as awards flowed his way, the Colonial Williamsburg Antiques Forum gave him an especially meaningful award and citation. In 1949, the First Antiques Forum had been a catalyst for Frank's conception of MESDA and its mission. In 1998, almost a



61. Frank Horton receiving the Crowninshield Award from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1970. *OSPC*.

half century later, the Forum honored him as “the mastermind behind what has now become a national movement recognizing the arts and culture of the early South.”²⁶⁸



Frank Horton, the mastermind, was busier than ever in 1970. On November 7, he was honored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, who bestowed on Frank and Old Salem the coveted Louise du Pont Crowninshield Award for “superlative achievement in the preservation and interpretation of sites, buildings and objects significant in American history and culture.”²⁶⁹

Twenty years into its restoration, Old Salem was thriving. MESDA, in its fifth year, was attracting growing numbers of visitors, scholars, and donors. Not even Frank Horton’s twelve-plus hour days, six-plus days weekly could accommodate all there was to do. His assistant and right arm, Brad Rauschenberg, was busier than usual as well, for he and his wife had a new baby daughter. “Jean Rauschenberg brought the baby by this afternoon late,” Theo Taliaferro wrote in her diary February 12, 1970. “It is the cutest little girl baby I ever saw. Three dimples.”²⁷⁰

Unlike the younger generation, however, Theo Horton Taliaferro was slowing down. She had little appetite for travel now, not even on short trips with Frank to look at antiques. In 1963 she had enjoyed two months of traveling in Europe with Miles and Ruth Horton, but now she was content to stay at home in the house on Church Street in Old Salem. Her boy Frank could bring the world home with him and tell her all about it.

On February 21, 1970, however, life changed

abruptly for all of them when Theo suffered a massive heart attack. The pages of her 1970 diary are largely blank, for she spent nearly two months in the hospital, struggling in vain to regain her strength. Friends and family hovered about, terribly concerned. Miles and Ruth came down from Blacksburg, Virginia, where Miles was a librarian at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University—Virginia Tech. They had built a house on a mountain top nearby, and filled it with art and music and Miles's ever-present microscopes.

"No certainty on when I can go home," Theo managed to write in her diary April 1. "Ruth has been getting 813 South Church Street ready for my homecoming. I have an idea she and Miles have reorganized 813 South Church. It needed reorganizing."²¹

Theo's spirits brightened when her granddaughter Caroline came to visit. "Caroline came to see me," Theo wrote. She loved seeing her granddaughter and her son spending time together. She noted in her diary that Caroline and Miles "are most congenial. Pity she hasn't been with him all these years as I believe he loves her better than anyone else. Guess that's natural, his only child. They are both bookworms."²²

She was home by mid-April, but soon developed an agonizing case of psoriasis on her hands and feet that spread inexorably and painfully to cover her entire lower torso. From that time on, she wrote in her diary only sporadically, her handwriting compromised by the bandages binding her hands, and by her memory. She was "turning day into night," she worried helplessly.²³ Sometimes she managed to write only three words—"What a life!"²⁴ She fretted about her finances, and her children. She wrote on April 22, "Frank has gone to bed at 9:40. He was up nearly all last night with men from Williamsburg. I think he is whipped."²⁵



62. Miles and Ruth Horton, 1970s.
FHC.

By late June, Theo seemed to be giving in to physical frailty, and giving up on the interests that had intrigued her for a lifetime. "Dark and dreary," she wrote June 16. "Just can't seem to remember to write in this book each day, maybe because each day is a replica of the day before."²⁷⁶

Then, "Home all day," she wrote in a scrawl. "Hands and legs all bandaged up. Psoraisis . . . There just isn't anything of interest to put in my diary. The days pass in the same old way."²⁷⁷ Days would disappear in blank pages, and then Theo would remember that she had neglected the daily journal entries that had been the habit of a lifetime. "I don't know what has gotten into me. I forget my diary. Well there isn't anything of interest to write in it."²⁷⁸

Frank helped the attending nurses care for his mother at home, and he and friends managed to get out her of the house a few times over the next few months, once to look for a toy for a gift to the Rauschenberg baby. But for Theo, there would be only brief surges of energy, and then malaise. By October of 1970, at the age of 78, Theo was spending most of her time in bed, "Just weak and no account," she managed to write.²⁷⁹

The last diary entry of her zestful, generous life was almost illegible: "October 23, 1970: In bed again today. Just feel weak and no good. Will try to get up come tomorrow and dress—"²⁸⁰

Theodosia Hamlen Liipfert Horton Taliaferro died on November 2, 1971.

V I

Theo Horton Taliaferro's obituary gave her equal billing with her son as the cofounder of the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts.²⁸¹ In later years, her role in establishing MESDA was sometimes overlooked, but her sons, her daughter-in-law, and others who knew the full story never lost sight of Theo's legacy.

She died at Forsyth Memorial Hospital and was buried in Salem Cemetery. Miller Williams, who had been devoted to Theo and who had helped to nurse her during the last years of her life, stayed

on for nearly thirty years more to look after Frank. But the house on Church Street must have been a lonely one after Theo's death. Mother and son had shared a home for most of Frank's life. They thought alike, shared a passion for antiquities and preservation, and, living up to the Horton family motto, gave without stint, sometimes to the point of personal sacrifice.

Once in the earlier years, Jim Gray remembered, Frank Horton had told him he wanted to retire. "I asked him what he planned to do after he quit," Gray said. Frank replied, "I could not think of anything, so I withdrew my resignation."²⁸² But by 1972, at the age of 54, and living alone for the first time, Frank could think of a number of things he wanted to do. He asked to be relieved of his Old Salem restoration duties so that he could concentrate on the work at MESDA. Then, in 1976, Frank turned over his administrative duties at MESDA to Thomas A. Gray, the new director. Collecting, writing, and research could now occupy Frank's full attention.

As his third decade at Old Salem neared its end, Frank Horton was busier than ever before—researching, writing articles, working with donors, overseeing projects at Old Salem and MESDA, monitoring the large grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. One autumn day, Jim Gray lured him away from his work to attend a Wake Forest University football game. Frank went that once, but he has never gone to another football game. In later years, when Gray asked him about the game, Frank said he "had completely forgotten our Saturday afternoon at Bowman Gray Stadium. This," added Gray, "is the man who has a memory like a steel trap!"²⁸³

With his mother gone, and a new director relieving him of the administrative chores that had stood between him and his research for so many years, MESDA was now Frank Horton's entire life. Miles Horton, who devoted much of his energy and his own resources to supporting science and the arts in Virginia, liked to tease his younger brother about the remarkable paths he had chosen—or been chosen by—in his lifetime. He and many others were in-

trigued about how this unique mission had come to pass. "Antiquarian?" Miles Horton asked on one occasion when he was called upon to toast and roast his brother. "What *makes* one? What roads lead to MESDA?"²⁸⁴

Other people might contemplate Frank and Theo's extraordinary achievements in the conception, design, and execution of MESDA, but Frank himself, by nature self-effacing and disinclined to self-congratulation, was far too busy to look back at his own life. He was immersed instead in resurrecting other lives through the artifacts of their material culture.

How had it all come to pass? Step by step, Frank would say. He was there. He saw what could and should be done. He did it. Once Jim Gray asked Frank how he wished to be remembered.

"Just say, 'He came and went,'" Frank replied.²⁸⁵

Miles Horton joked that "Running antique shops helps one along the road to MESDA! Especially if one cannot *sell* the damned things!" As Miles reconstructed the chain of events in Frank's life, "The day comes, dear friends, when one's stock grows enormous—there are *no* sales—so—VOILA [sic]—MESDA!!"²⁸⁶

Frank had put a different spin on his departure from the antiques business, Brad Rauschenberg recalled: "Corner cupboards," Frank said. "One-piece corner cupboards. They broke my back. Trying to lift them. I just couldn't do it anymore."²⁸⁷

Frank Horton possesses a wisdom whose edict he seems to respect when it tells him it is time to move from one enterprise to another. When he moved from his Old Salem responsibilities, for example, to focus on MESDA, he laid the groundwork for an unprecedented study center for the early southern decorative arts.

The MESDA field research program was most active between 1972 and 1982 in the landmark work of locating, photographing, and cataloguing objects. It has been called "brilliantly conceived and incredibly successful."²⁸⁸ Benno Forman, the Curator of Furniture at Winterthur, wrote that "a lifetime of devotion" equipped Frank Horton for the mission he had set for himself. Forman observed



63. Frank Horton and Brad Rauschenberg in the field, late 1970s. *OSPC*.

that Frank and MESDA's method "of systematically working over the South with their field representatives is a model of how to do that particular job and they are, throughout their entire operation, establishing a methodology which will furnish the patterns and techniques for all future decorative arts investigations in this country." He applauded "the high levels of scholarship and connoisseurship" of Frank's pioneering work, and predicted that there would be far-reaching repercussions in the form of "major publications and interpretation" in Southern history.²⁸⁹

One of the principal outcomes of MESDA research was the "Index of Early Southern Artists and Artisans" project funded in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities from 1980 to 1985.²⁹⁰ The purpose of the Index was to "allow scholars to study 17th, 18th, and early 19th century craft practices as nearly as possible within their original social, political, and economic context." Frank's goal was to establish "a major resource for people working in the fields of material culture, early southern history, and

related subjects.” He could see that the ongoing research at MESDA was facilitating major scholarship, and that during the 1980s historians were “becoming aware of the need to integrate knowledge of material culture into their understanding of the American past.” He and his MESDA colleagues hoped that the MESDA resource center would bring together scholars in related fields and enable them to learn from each other. Their final report to the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1985 concluded that “The files here [at MESDA] provide a prime opportunity for historians to study the material culture of the early South and to bring this integration of scholarship. Probably we don’t yet fully understand the contribution that this research project may eventually make to the study of the humanities.”²⁰¹

Frank Horton called MESDA’s groundbreaking research program “My pride and joy.”²⁰²

The fruits of this research would be shared in many important ways. One significant venue was created in 1975, with the founding of MESDA’s *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts*, which has become a vital clearinghouse for ongoing research in southern decorative arts and architecture. As Luke Beckerdite has said, the *Journal* has “forged a link between American studies, social history, and the decorative arts and created dialogue between academics, curators, collectors, and individuals and organizations in the trade.”²⁰³

Another channel for outreach is the successful Summer Institute on Southern Material Culture, a graduate-level program begun in 1976 to train the museum curators of the future. This “furniture camp southern style,” as it has been fondly described, is co-sponsored by the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.²⁰⁴ Graduate students and professionals in the field gather in Old Salem each summer to study one particular region of the early South—the Carolina Low Country, the Chesapeake, or the southern Backcountry. Institute students also travel to other historic sites, and many of them have moved on to lead programs at Colonial Williamsburg, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Historic Charleston Foundation,



64. Frank Horton educates and entertains Sotheby's American Arts Course participants, 1993. *OSPC*.

and other important museums. Through his visionary work, Frank Horton has simultaneously held the past and the future in his hands, as countless researchers, scholars, and former students can testify.

In 1988, in Frank's honor, MESDA initiated the Horton Series of books and monographs on southern decorative arts. John Bivins's authoritative book, *The Furniture of Coastal North Carolina, 1700–1820*, inaugurated the series.

MESDA continues to grow and thrive physically as well as intellectually. By 1986, the MESDA building had been enlarged to include a new west wing, where visitors could visit two new galleries and explore two rooms replicating the Humphrey Sommers House in Charleston, South Carolina. MESDA's "house" was greatly expanded and renovated by 1997, when The Frank Horton Museum

Center was officially dedicated. Here, visitors can roam through the past brought to life in period rooms, and explore large exhibitions with special themes and focus, while children can hold history in their hands in the imaginative and inviting Children's Museum.

This lifetime of achievement is the stuff of dreams and destiny—and dogged, single-minded hard work. To walk through the MESDA galleries today is to retrace a rich national and personal legacy. First and foremost, you walk through the history of southern decorative arts. This is the purpose and text of this unique museum. But in a parallel journey, a subtext, you step back into Frank Horton's personal history. Each MESDA room holds furniture, art objects, and artifacts lovingly collected, painstakingly researched, and tastefully, authentically arranged. Like nesting dolls, there are histories within history everywhere you turn. One prime example is the extraordinary Low Country couch on display in the Chowan room.

Frank had heard about this piece from North Carolina antiques dealer Willis Stallings, who wrote to Frank that he knew about a very special couch in a house near Bishopville, South Carolina. Furthermore, he said, he had never seen anything like it anywhere. Tenacious detective that he is, Frank drove to South Carolina with Brad Rauschenberg, and they knocked at the appropriate door, and got right to the point. Frank described the Low Country couch, and asked where it might be. The man who answered the door pointed to a long piece, darkened by age; it stood in his hallway, covered with hunting gear. He refused Frank's offer to buy the couch. His aunt had left it to him, and he didn't want to relinquish it. Besides, he said, the couch's cane seat was ideal for drying wet hunting clothes.

"Everything else in the house was Victorian," Brad remembered, "so if you didn't know decorative arts, especially furniture, you'd walk in and you'd think this was a Victorian daybed or swooning couch. When we first walked in the house, Mr. George McCutchen let us in, and a shotgun and his wet hunting boots were lying on the top of the couch."



65. Couch, Charleston, South Carolina, 1720–30, walnut and yellow pine.
HOA: 39¼"; WOA: 41"; DOA: 80¾". *MESDA Acc. 3490.*

Frank and Brad told the homeowner what they had come to see, and he invited them in. He would not allow them to photograph the couch, however. Undeterred, Frank and Brad called on Mr. McCutchen on subsequent trips through South Carolina. On one such visit, his sister was there, and Mr. McCutchen was taking a nap.

"We told her we'd like very much to photograph the couch," Brad recalled, "and because of the noise we'd make, asked if she would mind if we took it out on the porch where it was nice and shaded. So Frank and I picked it up and carried it out on the porch,

and started photographing it." Events would take an exciting turn when the couch's owner awoke from his nap. As Brad recounted it,

Meantime, George woke up, and he came out on that porch pointing his shotgun at us. He was really mad. We had to do some back-pedaling there all of a sudden. We didn't know if he'd shoot us. It was kind of serious there for a minute.

He said, "I thought you boys were trying to steal my couch."

We said, "Oh, no, we're only photographing it. Your sister said we could."

He let us go ahead. He knew we were really interested in it. The uppermost portion of the crest of the couch had always been gone, he told us. He said he never knew what that really looked like.

Once a year, we'd drop by and see him, but he would never sell that couch to us because his aunt had left it to him when she died.²⁹⁵

Frank Horton was not about to give up on the couch, however. He wrote occasional letters to George McCutchen, gently but persistently urging him to notify MESDA if he ever changed his mind about selling the couch. At times, Frank and Brad attempted bribery: When Frank learned that Mr. McCutchen's church needed a new foundation, he offered to pay for one. The offer was declined, as was Frank's offer of a new tractor. When George' McCutchen's twenty-year-old son, an amateur photographer, admired Brad's Haselblad camera equipment, Brad said he would give it all to the family in exchange for the couch. No deal.

As always, however, Frank was unrelenting in the chase, and he quickly devised a strategy to keep watch over the coveted couch. He subscribed to the county newspaper, a weekly, and studied the obituaries each Thursday afternoon when the paper arrived. He did not want to risk losing the couch to an auction or estate sale, in the event of George McCutchen's demise. Frank eventually turned the newspaper vigil over to the receptionist. Once, she reported that Mr. McCutchen had suffered a heart attack and was in the hospital. Then she gave Frank and Brad the news that he had been released from the hospital. All was quiet for a time, and then a new recep-



66. Frank Horton receiving an honorary Doctor of Humanities degree from Wake Forest University, 1995. *OSPC*.

tionist took over at MESDA. Soon Frank realized that the newspaper had stopped coming.

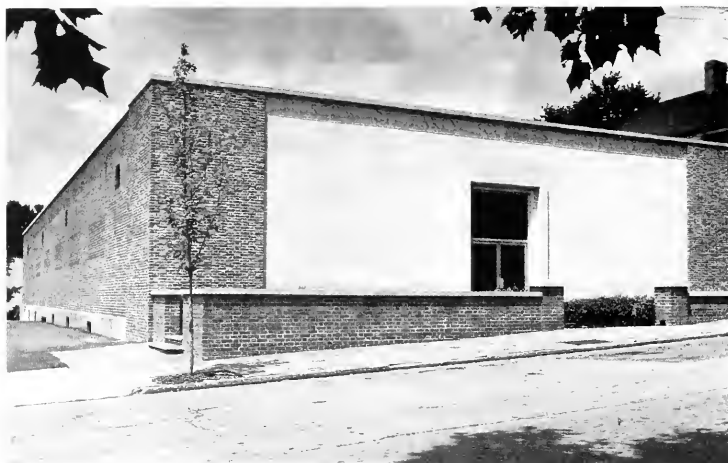
“We made a call, and discovered it had gone out of business,” Brad recalled. “About a month later, Frank got a telephone call from a lawyer telling us that Mr. McCutchen had died. They found a letter among his effects from Frank, talking about how MESDA wanted the couch. The family didn’t want it, and the executor was offering it to Frank. Frank hollered down the hall at MESDA: ‘Brad! Let’s go get the McCutchen couch!’”²⁰⁶

This handsome one-of-a-kind Low Country couch resides today at MESDA—a testament to the skill of southern craftsmen and the durability of their handiwork, as well as to Frank Horton’s expertise, tenacity, and sheer good luck—or, as some would say, to synchronicity.





67a. MESDA
Building, 1940s.
OSPC.



67b. MESDA
Building, late
1960s. *OSPC.*



67c. The
Frank L.
Horton
Museum
Center, 1997.
OSPC.

He has, of course, had his critics over the years. Obstinate, some people have called him. Opinionated. Overbearing. Grumpy. Blunt, even rude. He has not always maintained easy relations with the Moravian Church in Old Salem and Bethabara, or with all of his colleagues all of the time at Old Salem. But he has more fans than critics, and there is universal admiration for the magnitude of his achievement, and the enduring value of his life's work.

The honors have come to Frank Horton in a steady stream. In 1986, the graduates of the MESDA Summer Institute established the Frank L. Horton Fellowship Fund to give scholarships to summer students. The Frederick William Marshall Society gave Frank a Distinguished Service Award in 1987. When he retired in 1988, he was named Director Emeritus of MESDA. In 1989, from the Trustees of the Winterthur Museum, came the Henry Francis duPont Award for distinguished contribution to the arts. Wake Forest conferred an honorary Doctor of Humanities degree at com-

mencement in 1995. As noted, The Frank L. Horton Museum Center was dedicated in 1997, and the Colonial Williamsburg Antiques Forum honored Dr. Frank L. Horton in 1998 as the "mastermind" of "a national movement recognizing the arts and culture of the early South."²⁹⁷

As one of Frank's oldest colleagues and friends, Jim Gray can talk about him in public with authoritative familiarity, and get away with it. Frank wears white socks because they are easy to wash. He wears a headband redolent of Ben-Gay because it makes his headaches vanish. He is a fiendishly skillful poker player. He is a selfless man who lives simply and gives generously.

"He is a hard working, disciplined scholar," Gray said at the Members of MESDA Weekend March 15, 1997, when the enlarged, renovated MESDA building was renamed The Frank L. Horton Museum Center. "For many years he arrived at his office at 7:00 A.M. and opened the museum. Now, in his retirement, he arrives around 7:45 A.M. and still opens the museum for his staff. Except when asleep, he can usually be found at MESDA."²⁹⁸

Frank Horton has said to a number of people over the years, "I wouldn't trade my job or my life with anybody."²⁹⁹

Throughout the years, Frank's friends at MESDA have invited him to parties, attended the Christmas parties that his sister-in-law, Ruth, often hosted for him, and generally enjoyed his company. Sometimes they have played tricks on him—slipping into his house when he was out of town to short-sheet his bed, or decorate the windows with gaudy red and green Christmas lights, strictly taboo in Old Salem. All this he takes in good humor.³⁰⁰ They have also established a tradition of celebrating his birthday with a party, complete with an imaginative birthday cake.

Frank's eightieth birthday was celebrated with special festivities at the MESDA Members' Weekend March 20–21, 1998. Greetings streamed in to MESDA from all over the country. There was a note from the very first field representative, Milly McGehee. Cathy Jordan, another former field representative, wrote of Frank's "unmatch-



68. Frank Horton celebrates the installation of MESDA's Charleston Parlor architectural carving, by John Bivins, Jr., 1984. *OSPC*.

able dedication.”³⁰¹ Michael Collins of Savannah, Georgia, wrote about “how wonderful” Frank and his mother had been, telling Frank that Theo was “an elegant lady.”³⁰² Roz Smith Rea, a former field representative now living in Maine, wrote, “You are a true star of the museum world. I am grateful for all that I learned from you so many years ago!”³⁰³ Frank Hanes, Sr., of Winston-Salem wrote, “We owe you much for your determination, your continuity and purpose, your generosity and more, and it will never be in our capacity to express fully our gratitude.”³⁰⁴



69. Frank Horton with four of the eighteen women that worked as field researchers for MESDA (from left to right): Chris Minter Dowd, Jane Webb Smith, Mary Witten Neal, and Olivia Allison; 1988. *OSPC*.

Accolades and good wishes poured in from museum curators, scholars, collectors, colleagues, and numerous former students and longtime friends. Antiques collector Sumpter Priddy, III congratulated Frank on his “countless contributions to the field of American art,” and then wrote a summary tribute to Frank’s entire career:

I know how terribly modest you are, but I do need to say that your contributions far exceed regional boundaries for they have changed the very nature of decorative arts scholarship in America. Your ground breaking field research program, your exhaustive attempts to record the broadest range of decorative and fine arts, your years of tireless pursuit of the brilliant artisans long forgotten and only retrievable in obscure documents, and your selfless commitment to make this material available to your

friends and associates—all of these have rewritten the methodology of our field and continue to serve as a model for those of us who share your love of the past.³⁰⁵

Frank Horton marked the year 2000 by giving MESDA a splendid thirty-fifth birthday present. As reported by MESDA's newsletter, *The Luminary*, Frank's gift was "the largest in the history of the organization in both quantity—284 objects—and monetary worth. (Conservative estimates place its value at between four and five million dollars.)"³⁰⁶ Many of the pieces had been on permanent loan to MESDA. Others had been loaned for use at Old Salem. They included rare furnishings that Frank had purchased long before MESDA was even a gleam in his eye, and others that he bought with his own funds especially for the MESDA collections. In the spring of 2000, as the gift was announced, *The Luminary* called the roll of pieces that could be counted "among the stars" of the MESDA collection:

The seventeenth-century Virginia court cupboard; the Solomon Bell lion from Winchester, Virginia; the Charles Willson Peale portrait of Mrs. George Grundy; the Charles Peale Polk portrait of Mary Hawksworth Riddell; the Alexander Petrie coffeepot from Charleston; the gold medal presented to the Marquis de Lafayette in Baltimore in 1781, made by Charles Pryse; and scores of ceramics, prints and paintings, clocks, and furniture.³⁰⁷

Frank Horton has entered the new century still planning, still giving, still weaving the strands of the antiquarian past into the MESDA tapestry, preserving the handiwork of history for generations to come.



Back In March of 1988, as he was turning 70, Frank Horton decided he needed a new job description. By all ordinary practices, he was retiring, but Frank has never done anything the ordinary way. Getting wind that there might be some festivities to mark the event, Frank typed the following memo:

To: All our wonderful people at MESDA and Old Salem
From: Frank

Sally tells me that there is some consternation or question about my retirement come March 21st.

Well, when you get to be on up there in age you begin to think of all the things you would like to do and haven't done, and all the things you had rather be doing versus the things you don't like to do, such as budgets, meetings and the general bureaucracy which I have always shied away from, and you decide it's time to retire.

I hope you folks will reserve a little nook in the research room for me to do some of the things I want to do, and I would like to get out on the road and search out the antiquities MESDA needs to round out its collection—and I might just stop getting up at 5:00 every morning so that you won't have to turn off the alarm!

Now I know that this is not really retirement but a change in job de-



Photo. Frank Horton at MESDA, 1992. *OSPC*.



71. Frank Horton surrounded by the MESDA collection during construction of the new museum building, 1995. *OSPC*.

scription, so I ask that there be no retirement celebration, and if there is, I won't be there as I'm too sentimental about Salem and MESDA to have to put up with that kind of falderol [sic].³⁰⁸

Frank Horton has made remarkable use of his little nook in the MESDA research room. There he has worked surrounded by the countless index cards, photographs, slides, and computer records that document the journeys of many lifetimes—his own, of course, but more important, he would insist, the lives and legacy of the artisans whose work he has preserved; the men, women, and children of Old Salem and the South whose history he has illuminated; and the countless scholars, researchers, and visitors who come to MESDA and Old Salem in search of the past and its meaning, and their own connections to it.

Postlude

In his eighty-second year, Frank Liipfert Horton moved from the Reich House in Old Salem, his home for nearly four decades, to quarters at Arbor Acres, a retirement and lifecare community in Winston-Salem. Even though he no longer rises at five and goes to his MESDA office, he follows with keen interest the latest acquisitions and activities at the museum. When MESDA friends walk in to visit, Frank asks, "What's going on at MESDA? Has anything new come in?"

"Frank has many friends," Brad Rauschenberg reports. "He has a wonderful support team. He has lived a wonderful life. He is content. Of course, he was *not* happy when he couldn't get another car after his wreck in front of the Brothers' House."³⁰⁹

When pressed for details, Brad explains that when city workers were doing some work with heavy machinery in Salem last year, they parked the machinery in front of the Brothers' House. "Frank was coming home from his poker game one night, and he drove up Academy Street and turned right onto Main Street as he had done for so many years. All of a sudden, there was that piece of machinery and he didn't expect it. He ran right into it."

Frank shared the bad news with Brad early the next morning, over their usual cup of coffee at MESDA: "I've got to tell you something. I had a wreck last night."

"Are you all right?" Brad asked.

"Yes, I'm all right, but my car isn't."

"The car was totaled," Brad said. "That was the end of it. Frank realized it was time to stop driving. But he surely was disgruntled about it."³¹⁰

A few months later, coping with Parkinson's disease and worrying about approaching winter, Frank moved to Arbor Acres. He took a few favorite antiques with him—his high chest of drawers, tables, a Windsor chair.

His "card catalogue mind" is still active. According to Brad,

"Frank can still retrieve objects from his mind that he saw in the field many years ago. He'll say 'What about that table we saw in Hillsborough?' And I'll say, 'I'm still working on it, Frank.' His mind is still discovering things."³¹¹

There are losses to be reckoned with: His waning energy. His brother's death. Miles Christopher Horton, Jr. died February 7, 2001, at the age of 84. "Nicknamed 'Sir Miles of Giles' by his friends, he was a millionaire who loved blue jeans and running barefoot through his Giles County mountainside property," a journalist wrote after Miles's death. "He owned an observatory, a science center and an art gallery, all of which he gave to Virginia Tech. A lover of dirty jokes and one-liners, he was also a man with exquisite tastes in literature and music and an art gallery filled with examples of all artistic styles."³¹²

Miles honored his Winston-Salem high school biology teacher by founding the Flossy Martin Art Gallery at Radford University. In 1991, at the Horton Research Center founded by Miles and Ruth, the Flossy Martin Observatory was dedicated. There, on the mountain Miles loved, astronomers and their students can feast on the stars. Ruth Horton survives Miles, along with his daughter Caroline, her husband, Sheldon Lapan, and their sons Samuel and Tovin.

In one of his last letters to Frank, Miles wrote, "Keep getting better, Frank—I'll do the best I can to walk beside you. . . ."³¹³

On Frank's eighty-third birthday, MESDA friends took his birthday cake to Arbor Acres to celebrate his life, and his extraordinary contribution to American culture. A survey of his friends and colleagues yields images of Frank's lifetime of service. "People don't seem to realize that it was Frank Horton who was the basis of the restoration of Old Salem," Flora Ann Bynum reflects. "It is because of him that we had the research and the documentation to do it correctly. Because of Frank, we have it right. It has been done correctly. It could have gotten off to a totally wrong start. But Frank knew what should be done."³¹⁴

Brad Rauschenberg recapitulates the significance of Frank's work

at MESDA: "I see MESDA not only as our museum, but I see MESDA as a movement—a movement that is still going on."¹⁵ Sally Gant, Director of Education and Special Programs at MESDA, and Paula Welshimer Locklair, MESDA's Director of Collections and Curator, emphasize that a vital part of Frank's legacy is his role as a teacher who has helped to train men and women who have gone on to work in museums around the country. Through researching, writing, collecting, and teaching, Frank has successfully articulated his vision of what the museum can be and do.

That vision has been constant and compelling, as Frank's longtime colleague John Larson, Vice President for Restoration for Old Salem, Inc., has reflected:

I've often wondered how, for over fifty years, Frank has sustained his vision of Old Salem and MESDA. His unwavering and focused attention seems all the more remarkable in a society that is afflicted with Attention Deficiency Syndrome, and boasts of multi-tasking and works in thirty-second sound bites. Two museums stand today as attribute to his vision, tenacity, and perhaps most important, his organizational skill. Still, more than the wonderful collection of buildings at Old Salem, the remarkable period rooms of MESDA, or the priceless collection of southern decorative arts that he has assembled, I have come to believe that, in the end, Frank's muse is not objects themselves but rather the hunt for information and the delight that comes in discoveries. This lifetime quest for knowledge gives a remarkable example of what is possible in a life, and blesses us with a wealth of wisdom that Frank values far more than fame or his personal fortune. Now, we are all richer thanks to this most remarkable man.¹⁶

Frank Horton has always loved the hunt, the quest, the excitement of discovery. Only recently, a rare, long-coveted Charleston stretcher table arrived at last to join the MESDA collection. Frank and Brad Rauschenberg had discovered this handsome mahogany table in a Charleston outbuilding in the late 1970s. Because they were doing field research at the time, and because they never mingled researching and purchasing, they did not convey their interest to the owners. They did, however, alert Jim Pratt, a Charleston an-



72. Frank Horton, Jim Pratt (standing, left), and George Williams with the Charleston stretcher table, 2000. *OSPC*.

tiques dealer. Finally, in 2000, Jim Pratt was able to acquire the piece. He called Brad right away to tell him he had the table.

"Does MESDA want it?" Pratt asked. "It's expensive."

Brad groaned at the price, but it was a piece MESDA had to have. The piece is considered by some experts to be "the earliest known mahogany piece of furniture from Charleston."¹⁷ Brad conferred with Frank at Arbor Acres. Frank agreed that MESDA had to purchase the table.

"I want to see it when it comes," he told Brad.

Jim Pratt delivered the table to Winston-Salem the very next day, accompanied by his assistant, George Williams. Brad joined them, and they immediately took the table out to Arbor Acres so that Frank could inspect it.

"Jim was eager to show it to Frank," Brad said. "Everybody respects Frank so much. They want to be on hand when Frank sees a treasure like this. He is very excited about the table. And every time I go to see Frank, he asks, 'What's turned up at the museum?'"¹⁸

Frank Liipfert Horton is still hunting for the past, and looking toward the future.

Notes

1. Graham Hood, Vice President and Chief Curator of Colonial Williamsburg, quoted by Rick Mashburn in "Collective Genius," *Historic Preservation*, Vol. 42, No. 4, July/August 1990, 52.

2. Frank Horton to William Friday on *North Carolina People*, University of North Carolina Center for Public Television, April 29, 1992, for instance.

3. Ruth Horton Interview with Penelope Niven, October 20, 2000.

4. *History of the Lufpert Family*, no pagination [hereafter, n.p.], Typescript, Frank Horton Collection; hereafter, FHC.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*

9. Hermann Liipfert, Berlin Germany, e-mail to Old Salem, July 19, 2000.

10. Mr. Liipfert's great-grandson, Frank L. Horton, wrote, for instance, about the Davidson County, North Carolina cabinetmaker John Swisegood who, like other cabinetmakers, built coffins. See Frank L. Horton and Carolyn J. Weekley, *The Swisegood School of Cabinet-making* (Winston-Salem, North Carolina: Old Salem, Inc., 1973), Introduction.

11. Clarksville, Virginia *Tobacco Plant*, January 7, 1885, 3.

12. *Ibid.*, 2. Winston and Salem, North Carolina officially joined names in 1913.

13. F. J. Liipfert to Francis J. Liipfert, Jr., April 9, 1923, FHC.

14. Unidentified news clipping, Cora Hamlen Liipfert's Scrapbook, FHC.

15. In the 1970s, the Fourth Street house was moved to another location. The site of the Fifth Street house is now occupied by the Integon Building.

16. Miles C. Horton, "Roasted Nuts or Roasting Nuts or Roasting Notes," unpublished manuscript, 5, FHC.

17. F. J. Liipfert to Francis J. Liipfert, Jr., April 9, 1923, FHC.

18. Reta M. Evans, *Descendants of David Horton of North Carolina* (Blacksburg, Virginia: Southern Printing Company, Inc., 1987), 118.

19. *Ibid.*, iii.

20. *Ibid.*, iv.

21. *Ibid.*, v-vi.

22. *Ibid.*, 2. Reta Evans writes that it is unclear why David Horton moved to North Carolina as public records indicate that he was a "prosperous man." She conjectures that he may be the David Horton who was involved in "an accidental murder caused when tempers flared and a fight ensued" in Ulster County, New York on February 17, 1772.

23. *Ibid.*, xi.
24. "Catalogue of Wakefield," 4, reprinted in Reta M. Evans, *Descendants of David Horton of North Carolina* (Blacksburg, Virginia: Southern Printing Company, Inc., 1987), insert following page 97.
25. Reta M. Evans, *Descendants of David Horton of North Carolina* (Blacksburg, Virginia: Southern Printing Company, Inc., 1987), 98.
26. Dr. Miles C. Horton's older brother, Dr. William Calvin Horton, was active in "artistic and musical circles" in Raleigh. His younger brother, Dr. Sylvester Robert Horton, was a dentist and active church man in Raleigh. Reta M. Evans, *Descendants of David Horton of North Carolina* (Blacksburg, Virginia: Southern Printing Company, Inc., 1987), 114.
27. Ruth Horton Interview with Penelope Niven, October 20, 2000.
28. *Ibid.*
29. Miles C. Horton, "Roasted Nuts or Roasting Nuts or Roasting Notes," unpublished manuscript, 1, FHC.
30. F. J. Lupfert to Dr. M.C. Horton, December 2, 1920, FHC.
31. Ruth Horton Interview with Penelope Niven, October 20, 2000.
32. *Ibid.*
33. Miles C. Horton, "Roasted Nuts or Roasting Nuts or Roasting Notes," Unpublished manuscript, 5, FHC.
34. Ruth Horton Interview with Penelope Niven, October 20, 2000.
35. *Ibid.*
36. Theo Horton Taliaferro's Diary, January 2, 1950, FHC.
37. Bradford L. Rauschenberg Interview with Penelope Niven, January 23, 2001.
38. Bradford L. Rauschenberg to Gary Albert, April 11, 2001.
39. Miles C. Horton, "Roasted Nuts or Roasting Nuts or Roasting Notes," unpublished manuscript, 3, FHC.
40. Model T Ford statistics courtesy of the Model T Ford Club of the United States; contemporary Ford statistics provided courtesy of Michael Williams, Regal Ford, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, March 19, 2001.
41. Miles C. Horton, "Roasted Nuts or Roasting Nuts or Roasting Notes," unpublished manuscript, 3, FHC; and Bradford L. Rauschenberg Interview with Penelope Niven, January 23, 2001.
42. Miles C. Horton, "Roasted Nuts or Roasting Nuts or Roasting Notes," unpublished manuscript, 3, FHC.
43. Luke Beckerdite, "Frank L. Horton: The Past, Present and Future of Southern Decorative Arts," Lecture, Colonial Williamsburg Forum on Southern Decorative Arts, February 9, 1998. Typescript, 2, MESDA Library.
44. Frances Hayden Rhodes, "Yes, Mr. Downs, There *Are* Decorative Arts of Merit South of Baltimore!" MESDA Research Essay, March 14–15, 1997, 10, MESDA Library. This essay grew out of a MESDA/UNCG Summer Institute project begun by Frances Hayden Rhodes in 1994. It was delivered as a lecture at the MESDA Annual Meeting and MESDA/UNCG Summer Institute Reunion on March 16, 1996. The theme for the session was "'Ignorance or Prejudice', Indeed! A Day of New Findings and Research in the Study of Southern Decorative Arts and Material Culture."
45. H.G. Chatham, H.F. Shaffner, J.K. Norfleet, "In Memoriam," Typescript, FHC.
46. Unidentified news clippings, Cora Hamlen Lupfert's Scrapbook, FHC.
47. Unidentified news clippings, including obituaries, Cora Hamlen Lupfert's Scrapbook, FHC.

48. H.G. Chatham, H.F. Shaffner, J.K. Norfleet, "In Memoriam," Typescript, FHC.
49. Information from the Raleigh, North Carolina *City Directory* for 1925-1929 provided by Sue Zolkowski, Branch Manager, Olivia Raney Local History Library, Raleigh, North Carolina.
50. Superior Court Record, Forsyth County, North Carolina.
51. Unidentified news clippings, including obituary, Family Scrapbook, FHC.
52. Theo Taliaferro, "Supplemental Affidavits, Depreciation Schedules, Etc., Re Income Tax Audit, 1935, 1936, 1937, and 1938," FHC.
53. F. J. Lippert to Dr. M.C. Horton, December 2, 1920, FHC.
54. Ruth Horton Interview with Penelope Niven, October 20, 2000.
55. *Ibid.*
56. Frank L. Horton To Bradford L. Rauschenberg, March 29, 2001.
57. Bradford L. Rauschenberg Interview with Penelope Niven, March 7, 2001.
58. Theo Taliaferro, "Supplemental Affidavits, Depreciation Schedules, Etc., Re Income Tax Audit, 1935, 1936, 1937, and 1938," FHC.
59. Sir Anthony Wagner and F.S. Andrus, "The Origin of the Family of Taliaferro," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 77, No. 1, January 1969, 24, FHC.
60. Frank Horton's Reynolds High School transcript indicates that he received his diploma in 1935, and gives a full listing of courses and grades for both semesters.
61. Frank Lippert Horton's High School Transcript, August 25, 1936, FHC.
62. Frank Horton's transcript from the Augusta Military Academy in Fort Defiance, Virginia, shows that he was enrolled for 36 weeks, the equivalent of two semesters, in 1935-36. Theo Horton Taliaferro sent Frank to preparatory school at Augusta Military Academy for a year following high school graduation, just as she sent Miles to Woodberry Forest for a year between high school graduation and matriculation at UNC-Chapel Hill.
63. Theo Horton's Diary, January 2, 1936, FHC.
64. Theo Horton Taliaferro's Diary, March 4, 1936, FHC.
65. *Ibid.*, April 9, 1936, FHC.
66. *Ibid.*, August 16, 1936, FHC.
67. *Ibid.*, April 13, 1936, FHC.
68. Ruth Horton Interview with Penelope Niven, October 21, 2000.
69. *Ibid.*, October 20, 2000.
70. Bradford L. Rauschenberg Interview with Penelope Niven, January 30, 2001.
71. Bradford L. Rauschenberg to Gary Albert, April 11, 2001.
72. Ruth Horton Interview with Penelope Niven, October 20, 2000.
73. Paul Horgan was born August 1, 1903 in Buffalo, New York; he died March 8, 1995 in Middletown, Connecticut. His novels include *The Fault of Angels* (1933); *Main Line West* (1936); *Far From Cibola* (1938); *The Common Heart* (1942); and *A Distant Trumpet* (1960). He wrote three volumes of short stories and several children's books. Horgan won the Pulitzer Prize in 1954 for the two-volume *Great River: The Rio Grande in North American History* and in 1975 for the biography *Lamy of Santa Fe*.
74. Miles C. Horton, "Roasted Nuts or Roasting Nuts or Roasting Notes," unpublished manuscript, 4, FHC.
75. *Ibid.*
76. "History of Pace University," Pace University Home Page, January 12, 2001, available online from www.Pace.edu.
77. Frank Horton to Theo H. Taliaferro, September 29, 1938, FHC.
78. Miles Horton to Theo H. Taliaferro, October 10, 1938, FHC.
79. *Ibid.*, September 24, 1938.

80. Frank Horton to Theo H. Taliaferro, September 29, 1938, FHC.
81. *Ibid.*
82. *Ibid.*
83. Theo Horton Taliaferro's Diary, October 3, 1938, FHC.
84. *Ibid.*, October 5, 1938.
85. Miles Horton to Theo H. Taliaferro, October 10, 1938, FHC.
86. Frank Horton to Theo H. Taliaferro, October 23, 1938, FHC.
87. *Ibid.*, no date [1938].
88. *Ibid.*, October 23, 1938.
89. Theo Horton Taliaferro's Diary, October 7, 1938, FHC.
90. Frank Horton to Theo H. Taliaferro, October 23, 1938, FHC. Frank Horton discussed his mother's recent letter on this matter as he responded to her concerns.
91. Theo Horton Taliaferro's Diary, November 3, 1938, FHC.
92. *Ibid.*
93. Theo Horton Taliaferro's Diary, November 9, 1938, FHC. Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* had opened in New York in February of 1938.
94. *Ibid.*, November 11, 1938.
95. *Ibid.*
96. Caroline Horton Lapan Interview with Penelope Niven, October 21, 2000.
97. *Ibid.*
98. James A. Gray, Jr., "The Legacy of Frank Horton," Lecture, Typescript, March 15, 1997, MESDA Library.
99. Frank Horton to William Friday on *North Carolina People*, UNC Center for Public Television, April 29, 1992, for instance.
100. Bradford L. Rauschenberg Interview with Penelope Niven, January 30, 2001.
101. *Ibid.*
102. See, for instance, *The Magazine ANTIQUES*, February 1941, Vol. XXXIX, no. 2, and March 1942, Vol. XLI, no. 3, 219. In 1941, Mrs. J. B. Taliaferro's shop was located in Clarksville, Virginia, "Facing the Grace Hotel." In 1942, her shop was located at Kinder-ton, Virginia "on the Oxford Road, US 15." She advertised "American antiques of distinction."
103. Caroline Horton Lapan Interview with Penelope Niven, October 21, 2000.
104. Inventory, Leather Folder of Business Records, FHC.
105. Frank Horton to William Friday, *North Carolina People*, UNC Center for Public Television, April 29, 1992. This story is also told in "Frank's Place," *The Luminary*, Vol. 9, No. 1, Winter 1988, 1.
106. Linda Brinson, "Frank Horton," *Winston-Salem Journal*, May 11, 1986, A13. See also "Frank's Place," *The Luminary*, Vol. 9, No. 1, Winter 1988, 2.
107. Bradford L. Rauschenberg to Gary Albert, April 11, 2001.
108. *Ibid.*
109. Willis Stallings to Frank Horton, Typescript, no date, MESDA Library; Frank Horton, "Southern Antiques Dealers of the Past," Lecture, Typescript, 1981, MESDA Library.
110. Luke Beckerdite, "Frank Horton: The Past, Present, and Future of Southern Decorative Arts," Colonial Williamsburg Forum on Southern Decorative Arts, February 9, 1998, Lecture, Typescript 3, MESDA Library.
111. Bradford L. Rauschenberg Interview with Penelope Niven, January 30, 2001.
112. Theo Horton Taliaferro's Diary, January 21, 1940, FHC.
113. Ruth Horton Interview with Penelope Niven, October 20, 2001.

114. Luke Beckerdite, "Frank Horton: The Past, Present, and Future of Southern Decorative Arts," Colonial Williamsburg Forum on Southern Decorative Arts, February 9, 1998, Lecture, Typescript 3, MESDA Library.
115. Theo Horton Taliaferro's Diary, December 12, 1942, FHC.
116. *Ibid.*, December 13, 1942.
117. *Ibid.*, January 14, 1942.
118. *Ibid.*, July 14, 1942.
119. Hilding Jaderborg to Penelope Niven, Unpublished Memoir, March 22, 2001.
120. Hilding Jaderborg to Penelope Niven, March 15, 2001.
121. Quoted by Ruth Horton, Interview with Penelope Niven, October 20, 2000.
122. Hilding Jaderborg to Penelope Niven, Unpublished Memoir, March 22, 2001.
123. *Ibid.*
124. *Ibid.*
125. Frank Horton to Theo H. Taliaferro, December 13, 1942, FHC.
126. Hilding Jaderborg to Penelope Niven, Unpublished Memoir, March 22, 2001.
127. *Ibid.*
128. Caroline Horton Lapan Interview with Penelope Niven, October 21, 2000.
129. *Ibid.*
130. Lieutenant J. C. Hill, USNR, *Sturtevantures*, U. S. Navy Publication, n.d., n.p., FHC.
131. *Ibid.*
132. *Ibid.*
133. Frank Horton to Theo H. Taliaferro, April 13, 1944, FHC.
134. *Ibid.*, May 8, 1944.
135. Frank Horton to Theo H. Taliaferro, May 11, 1944, FHC. Actually, the advertisement appears on the inside back cover of *The Magazine ANTIQUES*, May 1944, Vol. XLV, no. 5.
136. Frank Horton to Theo H. Taliaferro, July 26, 1944, FHC.
137. Lieutenant J.C. Hill, USNR, *Sturtevantures*, U. S. Navy Publication, n.d., n.p., FHC.
138. Frank Horton to Theo H. Taliaferro, June 14, 1945, FHC.
139. Frank Horton to Theo H. Taliaferro, August 10, 1945, FHC.
140. *Ibid.*
141. *Ibid.*
142. Frank Horton to Theo H. Taliaferro, August 22, 1945, FHC.
143. *Ibid.*
144. Frank Horton to Theo H. Taliaferro, August 26, 1945, FHC.
145. Frank Horton to Theo H. Taliaferro, January 21, 1945, FHC.
146. "Frank's Place," *The Luminary*, Vol. 9, No. 1, Winter 1988, 2.
147. Advertisement, *What's Cookin': A Cook Book of Favorite Recipes* (Winston-Salem, North Carolina: Woman's Club of Winston-Salem, 1948), 10.
148. Jan Garrett Hind, with an Introduction by Frank L. Horton, *The Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts* (Winston-Salem, North Carolina: Old Salem, Inc., 1979), 20.
149. Bill East, "Rare Cupboard is Rescued from Meat Storage Duty," *Twin City Sentinel*, July 1, 1947, 4.
150. Mrs. Brockwell advertised the court cupboard as follows: "Booth of Mrs. B.L. Brockwell, Petersburg, Va., The First International Antiques Exhibition, Hotel Commodore, New York City, March 25-29, 1929." The advertisement including a photograph of the cupboard, is reproduced in *The Magazine Antiques* in January, 1982, 279.
151. Frank Horton, "Southern Antiques Dealers of the Past," Lecture, Typescript, 1981, MESDA; Luke Beckerdite, "Frank Horton: The Past, Present and Future of Southern Decora-

tive Arts." Colonial Williamsburg Forum on Southern Decorative Arts, February 9, 1998. Lecture, Typescript 4, MESDA Library.

152. Frank Horton quoted in Rick Mashburn, "Collective Genius," *Historic Preservation*, Vol. 42, No. 4, July/August, 1990, 53-54.

153. James A. Gray, Jr. Interview with Penelope Niven, January 30, 2001.

154. For a fuller account of this episode, see Frances Griffin, *Old Salem: An Adventure in Historic Preservation*, revised edition (Winston-Salem, North Carolina: Old Salem Inc., 1985), 15-16.

155. Mrs. Coons wrote about the time when her mother, with whom she ran an antique shop in Spartanburg, South Carolina, stopped by a "roadside stand" in Southside Virginia one hot summer day to look at some antiques that were for sale. She found "a simple Hepplewhite desk on frame" that she wished to buy. The young man in charge declined to take her check, however, and she had "just enough cash to return home." After much deliberation, the young man agreed to take a check from a nearby dealer whom both parties knew. After the buyer and her companion drove away with the desk, they began to notice a terrible odor coming from their purchase. They stopped to investigate, and discovered "The very ripe carcass of a dead mouse stuck within the interior of the desk." The young man who had sold the desk and the deceased mouse was Frank Horton. Mrs. Coons wrote that in later years, her mother enjoyed teasing Frank about "his distrust of her check and the unwelcome bonus he sold with his furniture." See Betty C. Coons, *Antique By-Lines (Southern Vintage)* (Richmond, Virginia: Guild of the Valentine Museum, 1979), 38-39.

156. Frances Hayden Rhodes, "Yes, Mr. Downs, There *Are* Decorative Arts of Merit South of Baltimore!" MESDA Research Essay, March 14-15, 1997.

157. Later, Helen Comstock wrote *American Furniture* (New York: The Viking Press, 1962), an authoritative study of furniture from 1640 to 1870. She called her book "a history of style."

158. Helen Comstock to Edward P. Alexander, February 10, 1949, Archives of Colonial Williamsburg, courtesy of Frances Hayden Rhodes.

159. List of State Representatives, Archives of Colonial Williamsburg, courtesy of Frances Hayden Rhodes.

160. Quoted by Frances Hayden Rhodes, "Yes, Mr. Downs, There *Are* Decorative Arts of Merit South of Baltimore!" MESDA Research Essay, March 14-15, 1997, 8.

161. Ruth Horton Interview with Penelope Niven, October 21, 2000.

162. Miles C. Horton, Jr., "Roasted Nuts or Roasting Nuts or Roasting Notes," unpublished manuscript, 3, FHC.

163. Quoted in Linda Brinson, "Frank Horton," *Winston-Salem Journal*, May 11, 1986, A18.

164. Frank Horton quoted by Luke Beckerdite, "The Past, Present, and Future of Southern Decorative Arts," Colonial Williamsburg Forum on Southern Decorative Arts, February 9, 1998. Lecture, Typescript, 5, MESDA Library. The reference to Alsbaugh's Flats is attributed to Frank Willingham, quoted by Frank Tursi, "Old Salem at 50," *Winston-Salem Journal*, September 24, 2000, A10.

165. R. Arthur Spauagh, Jr., President, Old Salem, Inc., 1980 *Annual Report*, n. p.

166. Frances Griffin, *Old Salem: An Adventure in Historic Preservation*, revised edition (Winston-Salem, North Carolina: Old Salem, Inc., 1985), 15.

167. James A. Gray, Jr., "The Legacy of Frank Horton," Lecture, Typescript, March 15, 1997, 2, MESDA Library.

168. Quoted by Frances Griffin, *Old Salem: An Adventure in Historic Preservation*, revised edition (Winston-Salem, North Carolina: Old Salem, Inc., 1985), 17. See this source for full details on the report.

169. For a complete account of the founding and organization of Old Salem, Inc., see Frances Griffin, *Old Salem: An Adventure in Historic Preservation*, Revised Edition (Winston-Salem, North Carolina: Old Salem, Inc., 1985). Author's note: When I was a child, I enjoyed occasional visits with Frances Griffin, who had been my mother's close friend and classmate in the class of 1938 at Greensboro College, Greensboro, North Carolina. In recent years, I have studied and greatly appreciated Griffin's remarkable writings about Old Salem. My own work has been greatly enriched by her groundbreaking work.

170. Frances Griffin, *Old Salem: An Adventure in Historic Preservation*, Revised Edition (Winston-Salem, North Carolina: Old Salem, Inc., 1985), 20.

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174. James A. Gray, Jr. Interview with Penelope Niven, January 30, 2001.

175. Theo Horton Taliaferro's Diary, January 5, 1950, FHC.

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196. Quoted in *The Luminary*, Vol. 9, No. 1, Winter, 1988, 2.

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304. Frank Hanes, Sr. to Frank Horton, March 1998.
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5. The table, now residing in the Criss Cross Room at MESDA, dates from either the late-seventeenth or the early eighteenth century. It is said to have been owned by Colonel Thomas Broughton of Mulberry Plantation near Charleston.
318. Bradford L. Rauschenberg Interview with Penelope Niven, March 20, 2001

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—*Penelope Niven*
Winston-Salem, North Carolina
April 11, 2001

About The Author

PENELOPE NIVEN is the author of *Carl Sandburg: A Biography* (Scribner, 1991; Eastern National, 2001); the co-author, with James Earl Jones, of *Voices and Silences* (Scribner, 1993; Simon & Schuster Touchstone, 1994; Proscenium Limelight Edition, 2002); and the author of *Steichen: A Biography* (Clarkson Potter/Crown/ Random House, 1997), named by *Library Journal* as one of the thirty-two Best Books of 1997. She is presently working on a biography of Thornton Wilder. She wrote the narrative text for *Old Salem: The Official Guidebook*, published by Old Salem, Inc. in 2000, and is Writer-in-Residence at Salem College in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. For her work as a biographer, Penelope Niven has been awarded three fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, two Visiting Fellowships to the Beinecke Library at Yale University, and two honorary doctorates, one of them from Wake Forest University, where Frank Horton received an honorary doctorate in 1995.

